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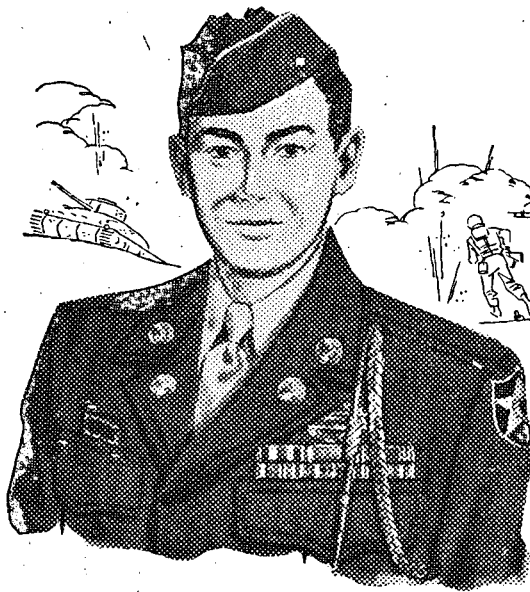
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STORIES



ARMAGEDDON by CRAIG BROWNING

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Are you man enough to wear this?

MEN of the Second Infantry Division—the famous “Indian Head” Division—can hold their heads high in any company of fighters. For this division is entitled to wear the famous Fourragere of the Croix de Guerre.

They won that honor in France in 1917 and 1918. For their combat record in World War II, they were awarded a dozen unit citations. Landing in Normandy June 7, 1944, the Second fought at St. Laurent sur Mer and liberated Trevieres. It captured Hill 192 in the vital struggle for St. Lo. It took Tinchebray, then swung south 300 miles to Brest, which surrendered in September. A month later the Second was biting into the Siegfried Line, and in January, 1945, it was in the thick of the Battle of the Bulge. Two key German towns, Monschau and Ahrweiler, were

taken in February and March, and by Day the division had driven all the way to Czechoslovakia.

It takes real men to measure up to the standards of a great fighting outfit like the Second Infantry Division. They've got to be hard, alert, skilled in the use of many weapons. For the ground combat soldier is the most important part of America's defense. He is the keen edge of the military machine.

If you like action—pride of achievement—the comradeship of a great group of men—there's a place for you now in the Second Infantry Division. YOU can wear the Indian Head insignia and the green cord of the Fourragere! Qualified men, 18 to 35,

can enlist directly into this great outfit for 3 years or more. Get full details at your nearest U. S. Army and U. S. Air Force Recruiting Station.

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Back cover painting by James B. Settles, illustrating "Spaceships in Ancient Egypt"

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The **OBSERVATORY**

..... *by the Editor*

WHENEVER we hear the word "Armageddon" we think of a gigantic final war in which the fate of the world is decided. Well, we've got such a story this month—that is, the title of it is "Armageddon" but if you are looking for a war you will be surprised. There isn't any war in it, but there is a new concept of the universe, and of the meaning of the word itself. The story is by Craig Browning, and we think you'll like this off-trail novel.

WELL, since our last issue, many things have come to light, and we hereby present three proofs of the world-famous Shaver Mystery. You will find the article presenting these proofs beginning on the opposite page. When you have read it, we very politely request all those who scoffed at Shaver's radioactive carbon and its presence in the human body as a poisoning agent to admit fairly that he was absolutely right. Also, we want those of you who laughed at the "exd" theory to admit that he was right. Because he is. And finally, those who stated there is no evidence of this planet being visited by space ships will be forced to admit that there is evidence, and if a photo isn't proof any longer, at least a photo that is vouched for by reliable people is. However, that particular proof isn't our province. We admit we could have duplicated it, but we preferred to have it appear in another publication, where it would certainly carry more weight. We are sure this other publication isn't bent on any hoax. Nor were we. There is only one proof remaining to settle the Shaver Mystery for good, and that is actual discovery of the caves and a dero, or one of the mech. We're waiting for that. Meanwhile, we see no point in repeating the Shaver stories a third time. They are too familiar to everybody. So Shaver's stories, from now on, are straight science fiction, and nobody will deny that when it comes to spinning a yarn, there are few who can surpass him.

WE HAVE a note from Chester Geier, who is handling the Shaver Mystery in the Shaver Mystery Club, a group of fans who put out a "fan-mag" which continues all these Shaver Mystery discussions on a scale *Amazing Stories* couldn't hope to equal, which says: "We would be pleased if

you would forward all letters from your readers which pertain to the Shaver Mystery." We'll do better than that, Chet! You Shaver fans, why not put this address down, and drop Chet a line when you have something to contribute to the Mystery? 2414 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Illinois. And with that we sit back and relax. Take it from us, we're glad the proof has come! We never realized what a lot of work we'd have to do when we first published "I Remember Lemuria!" We're tired! But happy!

ANOTHER thing we're happy about is the success of our new feature, "The Club House" where science fiction fans get together. We invite any of you readers who want to form local "gab-fest clubs" about science fiction to write to Rog Phillips and he'll publish your request. It is amazing how many people like to talk about their hobby, *Amazing Stories* (and, of course, other magazines which publish science fiction). Along those lines, we have a suggestion. You fans of fandom no doubt know that pulp magazines are banned in Canada. Well, there are a lot of readers up there who are very unhappy. We suggest that you invite them to join your club, and circulate copies of the magazines from your club libraries among those who want to join. It would be a good idea to do our northern neighbors in science fiction a good turn. We, the editors, are helpless, because we can't sell the magazines there even by subscription. If any fan group is interested in doing this, we'll forward letters from Canadian readers who request us for a solution of their problems. Any volunteers?

"DOOM GLOBE," by S. M. Tenneshaw is a rather unique little tale, and we present it in this issue with pleasure. It is a fitting companion story for Guy Archette's "Justice Satellite" which is the kind of interplanetary we go for. Many of our readers remember Lee Francis and his strange stories which kicked up such a fuss a few years ago. Well, we've got him back again with another of his unusual efforts. It's "Forgotten Hades" and we think you'll be surprised at every word in it. This guy is really original, take it from us! And so, we say goodbye for another month. *Rap*

The PROOF of the SHAVER MYSTERY

We present here three separate proofs of three separate sections of the Shaver Mystery, completely outlined in 1945 in *Amazing Stories* in both story and footnote. The reader will note that in each case, Mr. Shaver's uncanny "predictions" are precisely accurate, and that each, at the time, were positively declared by authorities to be impossible, and exactly contrary to true fact. Those same authorities today declare that Shaver is correct, and substantiate their statements with positive laboratory results.

Mr. Shaver's First Claim

ALL LIVING MATTER on Earth is contaminated by radioactives (especially carbon) which are taken in from the atmosphere, from the food eaten, from the water drunk. Water, especially, is impregnated with the radioactives. These radioactives, once accumulated by the body of the living organism, are not eliminated, and eventually result in a cumulative effect, that of death. Almost all elements can be and are infected by this mysterious "de" and become radioactive, including all those elements science considers as "not in the radioactive scale, and not capable of being made radioactive." This "de" infection, also identified as "cosmic rays" (being the ex-disintegrance or cosmic, sub-atomic dust of suns) pours down on the earth, lodging in and contaminating air, earth and water. The final (and disastrous) lodging place of the elements made radioactive by this process, is the human body (insofar as the most important result to human beings is concerned). This accumulation of radioactive matter in the body eventually kills us. It is old age. The old age that gives our life-span (ignoring other diseases which further cut it down) approximately 70 years duration. This span is determined by the rate of radiation of the radioactive elements (principally carbon) contained in the body, which increases constantly until that "critical" amount is reached which throws the balance toward more cell destruction than the body is capable of replacing.

Mr. Shaver's Requests For Proof

HAVING MADE THIS statement, Mr. Shaver pointed out means of proving the existence of the radioactive substances in the body, and a means of at least partially overcoming their effects, and of removing them from the body.

He asked that the human body, both young and old, be subjected to Geiger counter (and other) tests to determine if there was radioactivity present, and if it increased with age. Recognition of the fact was necessary as the first step toward a cure. The cure was suggested to be a filtering out of these radioactives from air, water and food by various means, among them using barium and calcium (which have an affinity toward radium) to eliminate the radioactives.

The following is an official release of the Amer-

ican Association for the Advancement of Science, dated 2 P. M., December 26, 1947. It was also reported in *Science News Letter* for January 3, 1948. We quote both reports.

Radioactive Carbon In Living Matter

RADIOACTIVE CARBON, produced by action of cosmic rays, has been proved to exist in all living matter, including humans, by a joint investigation of the Institute for Nuclear Studies at the University of Chicago and Houdry Process Corporation.

Radioactive carbon, known as Carbon 14, has heretofore been known only as a product of nuclear bombardment of carbon by cyclotrons, or in much greater amounts, by atomic piles.

The discovery that "radiocarbon" exists in living matter in quantities sufficient to constitute one of the most important sources of radiation to which the human body is exposed was made by Willard F. Libby, professor of chemistry at the university, and his assistant, a graduate student, E. C. Anderson, and A. V. Grosse, S. Weinhouse, A. F. Reid, and A. D. Kirshenbaum of Houdry Laboratories

The discovery was preceded by predictions made by Dr. Libby in 1946 that neutrons produced by cosmic rays should produce radioactive carbon in the vast ocean of nitrogen which is the top layer of the earth's atmosphere, and therefore should be absorbed by living matter. The existence of then unknown elements, as a result of cosmic-ray action, had been anticipated by Dr. A. V. Grosse of the Houdry Laboratories in the course of his research on element 91, protoactinium, which he discovered in 1934.

The original work, confirming that radiocarbon has an atmospheric origin and lives only 5,000 years, should give a new means of measuring geologic and archaeological ages, the scientists report. Since living matter that dies does not acquire new radioactivity from the Carbon 14 in the atmosphere, the age of any geologic deposits or archaeological remains which exhibit such activity can be determined by the amount of activity up to 40,000 years.

The experiments will also be useful to cosmic-ray physicists and geochemists in that they measure the ratio of the intensity of cosmic rays to

(Continued on page 162)

ARMAGEDDON

by CRAIG BROWNING

During the history of every planet in the universe, a time arrives when the final battle of Armageddon must be fought. The participants, however, aren't native to it!



He was seated in a chair on a platform, and it seemed he had a metal cap on his head



THE fat man driving the big sedan sized up the man with the elevated thumb eagerly and decided he would be a good listener to have along, so he braked smoothly to a stop.

The hitch hiker climbed in gratefully. It was a hot day and he had been walking for three hours without a drink of water or any respite from the searing hot rays of an unmerciful sun.

He wore a pair of unpressed slacks that had been expensive once, and could look so again. His hat showed better care. His shirt, open at the collar, had a band of dirt around the neck.

The fat man noticed these things absently and deduced that the hiker was someone who had either stolen somebody's fine clothes a week or so before, or had been very fastidious in his tastes up until a few days ago.

The expression on the hiker's face tended to support the latter theory. The forehead was broad and high, with two deep creases between the eyebrows that indicated a deep thinker. The expression of the face was one of brooding cynicism and strain. It was an honest face,—but all faces look honest until they appear above a rectangular board with a number on it.

The fat man slipped the car into gear and smoothly accelerated it until it was again gliding along the highway at a modest fifty-five.

"Going far?" he asked, smiling at the hiker.

"Just going," the hiker replied, shoving himself as low in the seat as he could get and crossing his arms.

"Where you from?" the fat man persisted, his voice friendly.

"Look, mister," the hiker said. "I just asked for a ride, not a chance to tell the story of my life."

The fat man looked straight ahead at the road and seemed to think this over. Then he braked the car to a halt.

"This is as far as you go," he said, his voice still friendly. A keen awareness appeared in his eyes. The hiker noticed this, and sensed that in spite of his fat the heavy man was able to take care of himself.

"Chicago," he said. He opened the door and stepped down onto the pavement. The fat man looked straight ahead. The hiker closed the door.

The car remained motionless, its motor purring softly. The hiker half turned, as if to walk away. He glanced through the window and saw the fat man still looking down the road ahead, making no motion to get the car going.

He opened the door again.

"If this is your way of chastising me for being uncivil, I stand chastised," he said, a wry grin twisting his face.

The fat man turned his head and smiled like a motionless robot suddenly becoming animated. His eyes twinkled merrily as he once more started the car.

"The trouble with growing up," he mused half humorously, "is that there is no one then to give us a licking when we need one, and most of us do at one time or another."

"Maybe you're right," the hiker said. "My story is short, sweet, and stereotyped. I'll give it, since you're curious about me. My name is Fred Gibbs. Up until ten days ago I had a nice job and a girl I was going to marry. The boss's daughter's boy friend needed my job. My girl couldn't stand me without the security of a loge at the opera every Saturday night, with me also footing her lunch every day. It was a bitter pill to take all at once like that,—out of the blue with no logical reason behind either event. I suddenly decided I wanted to see if the rest of the country was like that before cutting my throat permanently. So here I am. I'll get over it. In fact, I'm over it already. Ha. Ha.

But I apologize for being uncivil to you and I'm grateful to you for picking me up. I'll be decent the rest of the way if we switch to some other subject than me. O.K.?"

"O.K., Fred," the fat man said. He rolled a smile around on his lips like some people roll a cigaret or a Life Saver. "My name's Ben Hess." He took a puffy hand off the steering wheel and extended it toward Fred, pumping it vigorously when Fred took it.

"I'm one of those fat plutocrats you read about in the communist front papers," Ben went on. "I make a good living by buying property and things and selling it for more than I paid for it. Right now," his smooth forehead creased into a frown, "I'm having a spot of trouble. I bought one of the abandoned army airports in the town just ahead. It seems I have some trouble about a fellow who is using it and refuses to be dispossessed so that I can make a few thousand filthy dollars. I couldn't get anywhere with getting him out from my easy chair in St. Louis, so I decided I would come down here to Hawkins, Oklahoma in person and see what could be done."

"Did you ever fire anybody so that your daughter's fiance could have a job?" Fred asked.

"AS A matter of fact," Ben Hess said, grinning, "I'm not even married. I'm forty now, so probably I never will get married. My fat seems to be more than the GOOD looking girls can take,—even with my money."

"Then I'll ride with you," Fred said. "I've grown particular as of last week. If you had said yes I think I would have gotten out in the hot sun again."

"Fine," Ben said laughing. "Would you accept an invitation for dinner with me when we get into town?"

"Yes," Fred said quickly, then won-

dered why he had been so positive. The fat man had a strange effect on him. He was different than other men he had met. There was a strange aura of power about him, and absolute confidence in himself. He had handled him like an adult dealing with a child back there when he had stopped, yet in such a way that gave the impression he had had nothing but sincere respect for him.

As the car rolled in to the city limits of Hawkins, population thirty-five hundred, Fred said, "Maybe I can pay for my lunch by finding out why this guy that's giving you trouble is doing it."

"Oh, I know why already," Ben answered. "It seems he's working on some kind of an invention and can't find any other place to work on it."

"Oh, one of those guys," Fred said. "Well, you can pay the mayor fifty bucks and he'll have the sheriff move the guy off forcibly."

"I'm not sure I want to," Ben said slowly. "That's why I came down. I could have done that from my easy chair, but I think I admire the man's fortitude."

The fat man saw a parking space in front of a cafe and promptly slid into it.

"Here we are," he said with real satisfaction. "I'm famished, too."

"Yes, I can see you are," Fred said slyly.

The fat man grinned back at him.

"Some people read books," he said. "I eat."

The harried waitress cleaned the dirty dishes off their table and walked away while Ben was opening his mouth to give his order. He left his mouth hanging open while his eyes followed her. When she dumped the dishes through an opening in the partition that hid the kitchen and then disappeared through the door marked WOMEN he let his mouth close slowly and emitted

a deep sigh.

Fred chuckled mirthlessly.

"I can see you are innately cruel," Ben said with affected bitterness. "You enjoy watching the suffering of a fellow human. I think I'll hire you to throw that crazy inventor off my property and deduct twenty percent pleasure tax off your salary."

"You know," Fred said, "I think I WOULD like working for you; but of course you have no need of anyone. All the chores you have are clipping coupons and signing deeds and bills of sale, and you have to do that yourself."

"I could hire you to be my chauffeur," Ben said absently. "But I'd rather drive myself. It's my one physical activity. But I'll tell you what I'd like to do. You aren't in any hurry to get anywhere. I'll hire you to stick around until this business is settled. How about it? Twenty-five dollars a day and expenses."

"I'll stick around for nothing," Fred said stiffly. "I don't want your charity, even disguised as wages."

"I don't know whether I'll pay you that much or not," Ben came back. "I don't think a fool is worth that much. How about five dollars a day?"

"That's more like it," Fred said. "Maybe I can EARN that much."

"Then it's agreed," Ben said triumphantly. "Five dollars a day, — with twenty dollars a day expense money." His body quivered with suppressed laughter. It was too contagious. Fred found himself laughing with him.

The waitress came. Ben looked up at her hostilely.

"Young lady," he said sternly. "When I enter a cafe it is generally kept working at full production for at least two hours. So be on your toes until I leave. Otherwise I might only tip you a quarter."

"So then I only get a quarter!" she

said. "It would kill me to get that much all at once in this town. What'll you have?"

FRED finished his desert when Ben was on his third steak. He settled back to smoke. Ben, seeing that Fred was finished, raised his knife while he hastily chewed and swallowed a mouthful of food.

"You'd better go find a cleaners and get your trousers pressed, and maybe buy a clean shirt," he said. "Get a shave, too. By that time I should be nearly finished." He pulled out a hand-tooled light tan wallet and took a twenty dollar bill out of it, handing it to Fred.

"Save it until I can match it," Fred said, rising. Ben was still holding the bill out across the table when Fred left the cafe.

"So he still has scruples!" Ben said softly to himself as he watched Fred depart.

The airport was three miles south of town. It consisted of a large brick hangar capable of holding a couple of B29's at one time, a housing section with several two story frame buildings, and a high fence, so far as they could see as they approached it from town.

As they drew nearer they could see the field stretching out behind, covering at least forty acres, the dirt stretches between the concrete runways overgrown with tall weeds.

A gate across the road barred their entrance to the place. Fred climbed out of the car and went to open it. It was padlocked.

The sound of a gasoline motor came from the hangar. The intermittent blue flashes on the dirty windows of the hangar told that someone was welding inside.

Fred cupped his hands to his mouth and yelled, "Hey there."

After he had repeated it a few times the blue flashes on the panes stopped. Shortly after a door in the side of the building opened. A man stepped out, a rifle cradled under his arm. He advanced slowly.

He approached the gate lazily, taking plenty of time to size up his visitors.

Fred took that time to size up the man with the rifle.

He was perhaps thirty years old, his thick brown hair mussed, a welder's jacket hanging unbuttoned on his shoulders, his costume completed by a pair of almost skin tight jeans and heavy welder's boots.

Unaccountably the blue light of the welding arc started up again. Someone else inside was doing the welding now.

Fred heard the car door slam. He looked around. Ben had gotten out and was walking toward the gate.

The man inside stopped a few feet inside.

"No visitors allowed," he said briefly.

"I'm not exactly a visitor," Ben said politely. "I'm Ben Hess. I own this property."

"Can I help it if you own it?" the man said bitterly. "For two years it was deserted. It looked like the government had filed it in a back drawer and forgotten about it. I even wrote trying to get authority to rent it. All I got was a runaround. Finally I got a letter saying there was no record of such an airfield and referring me to the department of agriculture, so I got mad and just moved in. I figured I could finish my invention in six months, and didn't think the government could do anything about selling it or anything in that time."

"How long would it take you to finish it?" Ben asked.

"What's it to you?" the man asked. "You're going to move me out one way

or another anyway."

"That remains to be seen," Ben said. "Let us in so I can see what you're doing in there."

"No," the man inside said flatly.

"You can save yourself a lot of trouble," Ben said.

"Better do as he says," Fred said softly. "Mr. Hess is a right guy. You won't regret it if you do."

"Who are you?" the man asked beligerantly.

"I work for him," Fred answered. "My name's Fred Gibbs."

"An engineer, I suppose," the man sneered.

"I was an electronics engineer up until ten days ago," Fred said, surprised. "How did you guess?"

The man inside lifted his eyebrows. He glanced questioningly at Ben and turned his eyes back to Fred, studying him thoughtfully.

Then without a word he pulled a key out of his jacket pocket and reached through, unlocking the padlock.

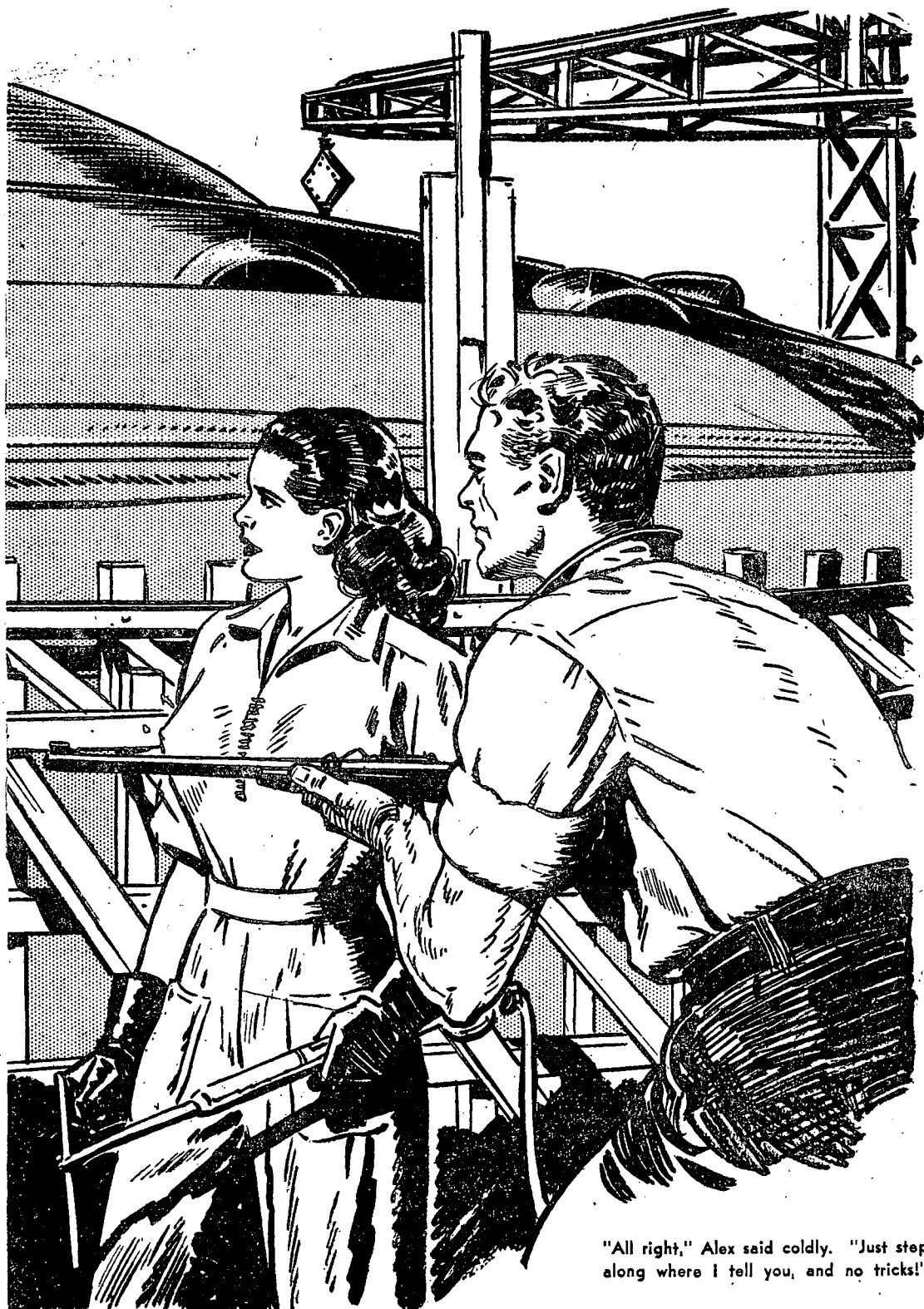
"Drive your car inside the gate," he said. He stood by the gate, his rifle hanging loosely, while Ben drove the car in. Then, closing the gate and padlocking it again he motioned the two men to precede him.

AT THE hangar they entered through the door the man with the rifle had come through. They found themselves in a room that had once been an office. Here the man ordered them to stop.

"Are you Alexis J. Fairness, the man who refuses to get off my property?" Ben asked. "Or are you just one of the men working for him?"

"I'm him," the man admitted. "There's just me and my sister, Louise." He nodded his head toward a solid panel door in a motion that they should precede him.





"All right," Alex said coldly. "Just step along where I tell you, and no tricks!"

Fred pushed open the door and held it for Ben to go through. It opened up on the main area of the hangar, revealing the invention.

It was a huge thing of bright metal, shaped like a bulging lense blank, with a wide edge. It was about fifty feet in diameter and twenty feet thick at the thickest part of the bulge. The rim was about six feet wide.

Except for two broad bands of black that formed the edges of the rim, the entire skin of the ship, for it was obviously intended to be some sort of airship, was of aluminum or another bright, silvery metal.

It was held in the air by a wooden framework that kept the lowest area of the ship's belly several feet off the concrete floor.

Fred whistled his amazement.

"Keep going," Alex said, indicating a set of metal steps that ended at an opening in the underside of the thing.

The two men went willingly, anxious to see the inside of the ship.

The opening admitted them to a large compartment. There were six inches of the black stuff solidly packed between the undershell and the deck of the compartment.

In the center of the room was a metal set of steps leading to a second deck above. Alex motioned them to continue upward. On the upper deck there was a similar room, but with doors in the side walls.

Fred and Ben paused, waiting for Alex to come up. He came up with his rifle held ready, its muzzle wavering from Fred to Ben.

"All right," he said coldly. "Through that door over there."

"What's the idea?" Fred exclaimed.

"The idea is that I'm not going to have you figure out the secret of my invention and then delay me in finishing it until you can beat me to it," Alex

said. "You're going to stay in here until the trial run. You'll get enough food." He glanced at Ben's corpulence and added, "I hope."

"But this is ridiculous!" Ben sputtered. "I told you I was open to reason. Be reasonable."

"This is safer," Alex said flatly. "You can't get out. I ought to know because I built the room you'll stay in."

"I don't think you'd commit murder to protect your invention," Fred said, advancing slowly. "If you did your invention wouldn't do you any good. Ben says he will help you. I think he's telling the truth. I'm going to take your rifle away from you. You can kill me if you want, you know. But that would be murder." He advanced slowly, cautiously.

"Don't do it, Fred," Ben said. "It isn't worth it."

BOTH men's eyes were fixed on Alex. His face was tense as he watched Fred come closer. There were beads of perspiration forming on his face. The finger of his right hand was crooked over the trigger, the knuckle white and rigid.

"You can't do it, Alex," Fred said. "It would be useless murder. I wouldn't steal your idea, and I wouldn't give it to Ben for any amount of money. If you shoot me it will be just because you think I'm a liar, and there isn't any proof."

"Stop, Fred," Ben said. "Don't force him."

"Stand back," Alex said grimly. "One step more and I'll shoot."

"You'll have to shoot Mr. Hess, the owner of this property, too," Fred said, pausing. "He will be a witness to murder otherwise. You'll have to get rid of the bodies. You'll have to talk your sister into playing along with you when you are a murderer." Fred slowly ad-

vanced his foot and took another step.

Suddenly Alex reversed the gun and swung it at Fred's head. Fred caught the stock and wrenched the gun free, tossing it across the room.

With fists flailing, Alex closed in. He landed a successful right to Fred's ribs and grazed his chin with a blind left.

Fred brought in a short jab to the chin that sent Alex back. He caught himself and came in more cautiously. Fred feinted with a left and Alex fell into the trap, swinging a wide left that never reached. Fred seized the wrist and twisted viciously, forcing Alex to turn his back to relieve the pain, but he lashed out with a back-kick to Fred's shin with his heavy boots that connected.

Fred let go with an exclamation of pain. They stood glaring at each other, neither wishing to assume the offensive.

"Stop it!" Ben said. "Stop it or I'll take you both down and sit on you. I used to be a wrestler, and I can still lick the both of you put together."

Fred and Alex looked at Ben's huge girth and glanced at each other amusedly.

There was an interruption. A girl with flowing brown hair and a dirt streaked face came up the stairway. She wore a welding outfit.

"This must be his sister, Louise!" Fred thought to himself.

She looked from her brother to Fred, taking in the rifle tossed in one corner.

"What's going on here?" she demanded.

"Nothing at all," Ben said. "You're brother was being just a little hasty, but it's all right now." He smiled disarmingly.

"Who are you?" Louise asked.

"He's just the guy that owns the field," Alex said dispiritedly. "I had a crazy idea about locking them up until we finish the ship. This," he nodded in

Fred's direction, "is an engineer he brought along. I think they plan on stealing my idea and tying up my ship until they can make one and beat me to the patent."

"That's not true," Fred said. "As a matter of fact I don't really work for Mr. Hess. I never saw him before he picked me up on the highway a couple of hours ago. I was hitch hiking. Mr. Hess thought he might have some trouble and maybe felt a little sorry for me. Anyway, he offered me a job. I'm just to stick around until he gets this business settled. Then I'm a hitch hiker again."

"Is that true?" Alex asked Ben.

"Yes, it's true," Ben admitted. "I didn't even know he had been an engineer."

"If you'd only cool off and listen to him," Fred said, "maybe this whole thing could be straightened out. He told me he wanted to see what you were doing, and if it was worth while and it would work you real harm to put you off right now, maybe you could stay."

"Well, why don't we listen to him and try to explain our side of things then?" Louise asked Alex.

"O.K.," he gave in.

"Let's all go down to the office we use as a kitchen," Louise suggested. "I'll make some coffee."

THE kitchen turned out to be a hot plate, a wash basin, and a couple of benches and a table in what had been the private office of some officer during the war.

While Louise busied herself with the coffee maker the three men settled themselves on the benches.

"Tell me about your invention,—what you care to disclose," Ben suggested. "I take it it is an airplane of some sort."

"The telling won't sound very prom-

ising," Alex began. "You remember the flying saucer hoax? Well, sis and I saw one. We didn't report it to the papers because it was at the end when they were saying the thing was a fake, and the army intelligence had made a formal announcement that the thing had no proof and would be dropped."

"You saw one?" Ben asked.

"Yes," Alex repeated. "We were driving out west of here. I saw what seemed to be an airplane zooming down out of the clouds. It leveled off about a mile off the road. I stopped the car and we got out to see it better. It was shaped like this ship we're building now. It had slowed like it was preparing to land. Evidently it saw us and decided not to. Then the belly of the ship began to glow like it was hot and the ship started to lift. It passed directly over us, not more than a hundred feet in the air. That rim around the edge was glowing almost white hot at the back, the glow dying off before it got around to the sides. There weren't any jet motors or propellers on it either."

"So you are trying to imitate that ship?" Ben asked, a smile of amusement on his fleshy face.

"That's the queer part," Alex said, frowning. "It circled and came back over sis and me. Then all of a sudden it seemed the whole thing came to me like a flash. I knew I could build one exactly like it and it would work. I even knew what kind of metal to use for the shell and how to power the thing. Performed an experiment that proved I was right, too."

"What kind of experiment?" Fred asked.

"I won't give you the details," Alex said. "But I built a crude setup using the principle that had come to me. I set the thing on a scales. It weighed ten pounds before I turned on the power, but after I got it working it

weighed only four pounds. I took measurements and figured out the details of this ship. It won't be just a flying machine. It will be able to leave the Earth!"

"Won't that take atomic power?" Fred asked.

"No!" Alex replied. "It won't take much power at all. You see, the rocket principle is all wrong. It makes you carry all the mass you are going to use for thrust right with you, and it takes almost as much mass as there is in a rocket ship to leave the Earth. With this ship you don't carry any of your thrust mass with you. You just use the material around your ship, and in a way never dreamed of before. That's all I'm going to tell you about the drive principle. You can learn the rest when I get my patents."

"Is it a new principle in science?" Fred asked.

"You'll find the principle used in any radio set," Alex grinned.

"How soon do you think you can finish the ship?" Ben asked.

"Two more weeks should do it," Alex answered. "At least by then I can get it off your property. Before then I would have to just cut it up into pieces small enough to put on a truck and cart it off to the junk pile."

Louise set four cups on the table and poured coffee in them.

"Would you like a sandwich or something?" she asked Ben.

"Ahem," Ben said uncomfortably, glancing at Fred. "I just ate, but then I am always hungry. Yes, I could use three or four sandwiches. Thank you, young lady."

Fred grinned at Louise.

"Don't fix me anything," he said. "I can live off the crumbs Ben drops and get fat."

"That's very unkind of you, Fred," Ben said. "I think I'll fire you."

"I can use a good engineer," Alex said. "Now that you're out of a job how about working for me?"

"I think I'd like it," Fred said, looking at Louise.

"Now, just a minute," Ben said hastily. "I haven't fired him yet. I was just considering it."

"What would be my first job?" Fred asked, ignoring Ben's protest.

"To throw this money grabber off his property," Alex answered.

Ben chuckled throatily.

"I see I've lost Fred," he said. "The inducements you offer are better than mine. I can only offer a salary. But speaking of money, where did you get all the money this thing is costing you, Alex?"

"I sold your gasoline storage tanks and a few odds and ends," Alex said, winking at his sister.

"FINE," Ben grinned. "Then when the ship is finished it belongs to me." His enormous sides shook with laughter. "You know, Alex, I think I like you. You're stubborn and little more than a plain fool, but I like you. It won't hurt me to let you use this airport for another month or two, and if you've got something maybe we can work out a deal that will make us both rich. If your ship is a success you'll have to get patents, hire good lawyers to make sure you're fully protected, and have backing that will bring you the greatest chances for cashing in on your invention, you know. I have enough money. More than enough."

"Well, that's the end of my job," Fred said, rising. "Guess I'll be on my way. If I get out on the highway right away maybe I can make it into New Mexico before nightfall."

"Don't go, please," Louise said quickly. Then she bit her lip and

turned a bright shade of red. She tried to hide this by turning her back and picking up the coffee pot.

Alex glanced swiftly from Fred to Louise.

"Why don't you stick around, Fred?" he suggested. "I could sure use an engineer."

"That's what I meant," Louise said hastily. "Alex has been working so hard. He needs another man to help him."

ALEX sat in the pilot's seat. In front of him was an instrument board. It was utterly different than the panel of a conventional plane.

"Here goes," he muttered tensely. He reached out and flicked a switch marked with a capital H. Sixty seconds passed, then the pointer on one of the electrical meters broke away from the zero peg and started to climb. The dial was marked in degrees of temperature.

From somewhere in the ship came a shrill whine as of a high speed turbine.

Four pairs of eyes watched the needle on the temperature gauge climb until it reached a heavy line on the face of the instrument.

Then Alex flicked another toggle switch. Instantly the ship lurched. He flicked the switch to the off position and there was a drop and a bounce that jerked their heads painfully.

With a satisfied grunt Alex flicked the first switch to the off position.

"That's that," he said. "Let's go out and see if we did any damage."

"Isn't it perfectly wonderful!" Louise exclaimed. "Now we can make a test run."

"Not we," Alex grinned. "If the thing goes into a spin I'm the only one that's going to get killed."

"That's what YOU think," Louise retorted, and from the glint in her eye Alex knew he'd never get off the ground

without his sister.

Fred, Alex, and Louise crowded down the metal steps with Ben following more slowly. Alex ran over to a tape on a ratchet catch reel and measured how much had unwound.

"We lifted six feet off the ground," he exclaimed. "Good thing I shut off the power when I did or we'd have crashed."

He looked over his head at the sleek belly of the ship with a fatherly pride in his eye. Fred and Louise stole a look at each other and smiled knowingly.

"Well," Alex said, "There's no time like the present for giving it a full fledged test run. Open the hangar doors, sis. Ben, you get in the tractor."

Louise ran to the far corner of the hangar to the door control. Alex waited until she was there and the doors were growling open, then spoke in a low voice to Fred.

"You'll have to keep her off the ship, Fred. It's too great a risk on this trial run for more than one to go up."

"You're right, Alex," Fred replied. "But how about me making the trial run and you staying on the ground. I'd rather face that risk than Louise's ire."

"Nothing doing," Alex said firmly. "If the ship crashed without my having a chance to get her in the air I wouldn't have the spirit to build another. It's MY baby."

The thunder of the hangar doors hushed. The tractor motor coughed into life. Slowly the huge ship moved out into the open, Alex, Fred, and Louise walking behind it.

The huge wheels of the retractible landing gear salvaged from a dismantled B29 rolled smoothly on the concrete. Ben stopped the tractor when the ship reached the head of the runway and lifted the lever that unhooked the coupling, then pulled the tractor over to one side in the weeds along the

strip.

Alex gave Fred a knowing look. Fred, a worried frown on his face, stepped closer to Louise. Suddenly he had her arms pinned behind her.

Alex spurted to the ship, grinning to himself as he heard his sister's angry shouting behind him. He turned before entering the ship and saw Louise break away, with Fred nursing a hurt shin.

He wasted no time, but climbed through the hatch and dropped its cover in place, locking it securely.

Louise, seeing she had been outwitted, gave up and returned to Fred, glaring at him.

"If he crashes and dies," she said, "I'll never forgive you."

"If he dies I was only fulfilling his dying wish," Fred came back at her.

"Oh, so now you shift the blame onto my brother!" Louise exclaimed.

"Why not?" Fred answered coolly. "He isn't here to defend himself now, and I'm a heel."

"I, I didn't mean that," Louise said. "I'm just angry."

"Save it, Louise," Fred said. "We'd better get well out of the way before the ship starts."

THE bright silver band that formed the rim of the ship was beginning to change to a reddish golden color. Fred and Louise trotted over to where Ben sat in the tractor.

As they reached the tractor the ship began to move slowly down the runway. The entire ship now seemed bathed in a film of golden, undulating force.

While still barely moving forward it lifted from the runway. Its wheels retracted. It hovered almost stationary, seeming to defy the laws of gravity. Then with a flash of blurring light it was gone.

"He used too much power," Fred

muttered. "We'll have to put a vernier dial on the panel for that."

The three figures huddled close together, waiting. Ben sat motionless in the tractor, a fat Buddha in modern business attire. Fred and Louise stood close together, apparently unconscious of the fact that his left arm encircled her waist and her head lay against his shoulder.

A full fifteen minutes passed before the ship again came into view. First it was a short segment of silver line in the sky, then it seemed to turn as it came closer, presenting an oval of bright silver with a small dot of gold in its center.

Before it reached the field it changed to the golden color, decelerating swiftly. Above the spot where it had taken off it paused briefly while the landing gear dropped down, then settled smoothly.

The golden color faded to a bottomless black which emerged to a dull, then a bright silver. The hatch cover lifted, and Alex dropped down, a light of triumph and excitement illuminating his features.

"It works!" he shouted. "It works!"

"One thing I've been wanting to ask you, Alex," Ben said, looking over the piles of stores that were being unloaded from the truck, "Where did you get the know how to build the ship so that it works perfectly the first time?"

"I told you," Alex panted, dropping the box he had just lifted back in place on the pile, and straightening up. "When sis and I saw that flying saucer it just came to me in a flash how to build one."

"I know," Ben persisted. "But did all the details of design, the instrument board, and even the rivets and welding come with it? That's an awful lot for just a single flash!"

"Well," Alex admitted. "To tell you

the truth, it seems remarkable even to me. Almost too much for just a lucky hunch. I knew welding before. Started it at a shipyard during the war and then went into the navy as a welder. Sis went to welding school and worked in the same shipyard until the war ended."

"So all you knew was welding!" Ben exclaimed.

"Oh, I knew a little more than that," Alex replied. "I had two years of college. I majored in engineering, so I knew a little about metals and math. But the planning of the ship came too easy to be just luck. I had no trouble finding the metals and materials I needed. There seemed to always be just the amount I needed available, and in two instances things were accidentally included in orders that I had forgotten to order! Figure that one out. Once something was accidentally included in an order that I didn't even know at the time I would need. It came the morning of the day I found out I had to have it!"

"Then you think there might be something supernatural about it?" Ben asked.

"NOT supernatural," Alex objected.

"I don't believe in the supernatural. But look at it this way, Mr. Hess. Sis and I saw a ship just like this one I built. So to us the ships certainly exist, although to you, perhaps, and to the United States government, and most of the people, they are doubtful. If you found a stainless steel kettle in the remains of some ruins that had been buried for at least a proveable fifty-thousand years you would have to conclude that there were people fifty thousand years ago who knew how to alloy stainless steel, and therefore had a modern knowledge of metallurgy,—consequently a knowledge of chemistry in general that was comparable to ours

of today. You could draw all kinds of necessary conclusions from the simple fact of the stainless steel kettle."

"True enough," Ben said. "So you conclude from your certainty that such ships exist that there is a civilization some place on Earth that is superior to ours, which we have never contacted. Is that right?"

"On Earth,—or some place else," Alex said quietly. "Personally, I don't think it's on Earth or in the Earth, although they might have stations some place on the surface far from civilization and carefully hidden."

"But why?" Ben asked. "Surely if you could order materials and machinery from a mail order house more or less, and build one of these things, then Russia or even some other country outside the United States could just as easily have invented the thing and be making hundreds of them in preparation for the next war,—even practicing over the U.S. to familiarize the pilots with the geography of our country before they attack!"

"I might believe that except for one thing," Alex answered. "I don't think my sudden flash that gave me the knowledge necessary to make one was just a hunch, nor was it supernatural. I don't think that ship we saw just happened to be where we were by chance. I don't think I stopped the car and got out to look at it out of just curiosity, and I don't think it came close and circled back over us just because its pilot had been planning on doing that whether we were there or not. I think the knowledge I got by 'inspiration' right there was planted in my mind from some person, either directly or by some machine, on that ship."

"Why didn't they just land, then?" Ben objected.

"I don't know," Alex said slowly.

"There **MUST** have been a reason. There must be some reason why the people that built those ships don't land and contact the government. I've been trying to think what it might be, and can't find the answer."

"Do you suppose it's because they don't *want* to contact the government?" Ben said, amused.

"If they don't want to, their flying over the United States would be a hostile act," Alex answered. "And I don't think they're hostile. Otherwise, why would they tell me how to build the ship? They must have known I'd patent it, and then, no matter what happened, the government could take the patent and build more of the ships. I think the reason they flew over the whole country so much was to firmly establish in the minds of thousands of people the **FACT** that they exist."

"Why would they want to do that?" Ben asked.

"Because so long as there **ARE** such ships, and their origin is unknown, the United States will think twice before going to war," Alex said quietly.

"Nonsense," Ben snorted. "There're too many more reasonable explanations. The United States would go to war if she thought it necessary regardless of any unknown and possibly superior weapon. They could have been mapping the planet if they're from some other world."

"Sure," Alex replied. "But remember, I built the ship from nothing more than 'inspiration,' and maybe my ideas on the reasoning behind all this is the same kind of knowledge."

"Maybe it is," Ben said quietly.

Alex picked up the box he had set down and disappeared through the door into the hangar.

"And maybe the whole thing is warping your judgment," Ben said reflectively, watching Alex's retreating back.

A SHOUT from the direction of the gate made Ben turn his head. Louise was there with an armload of groceries. He went to meet her.

"Hello, Ben," she said breathlessly.

"Let me take those," Ben said, unlocking the gate for her with a key that Alex had given him the day before.

He relieved her of her sacks of things and perched them comfortably on his midsection, balancing them with one arm.

Louise retained the newspaper.

"What's the news?" Ben asked.

Louise spread out the paper and glanced over the headlines.

"Say!" she exclaimed suddenly. "Something happened right near here! Two sedans loaded with orientals were found in the ditch five miles west of Hawkins on the highway. The cars were riddled with bullets. All the men were dead. Fifteen men—all orientals of some kind. The cars had California licenses. The state police have wired to Los Angeles in an effort to find out who the men are and who owns the cars. The motive might be robbery because all valuables were missing; but all identification was missing too, so maybe it was some sort of a gang killing."

"Is that all it says?" Ben asked, compressing his lips grimly.

"That's all," Louise answered. "Maybe the afternoon paper from Oklahoma City will tell who the men are. It's—queer, isn't it?"

"Oh, not necessarily," Ben answered. "This is on the way from Los Angeles to Chicago. Maybe one gang tried to escape another, and the other caught up with them here."

"Yes," Louise said thoughtfully. "That must be it."

"I just remembered something," Ben said, stopping suddenly. "I'll have to go down to the telephone office and make a long distance call to St. Louis. Can you

carry your packages the rest of the way all right?"

"Of course," Louise exclaimed. "Go right ahead."

Ben hastily gave her back her load and went to his car. He muttered to himself at the gate at the delay caused by getting out and unlocking it, then driving through, then getting out and locking it.

A trail of dust blotted out the sight of the airport behind him as he sped toward town.

At the telephone office he called the Oklahoma State Patrol headquarters. After he hung up and left the telephone office he walked up the sidewalk to the cafe.

"Mongolians!" he muttered to himself. "This gets more and more interesting. And from the angle of the shots the gunning had to be from a plane!"

He placed an order for fried six over easy with a double order of toast with the silent thought that that would keep him from getting hungry before lunch time. If it weren't for these in between meal snacks he would starve to death on the slim meals Louise prepared at the airport for them.

AS HE ate his eyes stared straight ahead, a worried frown creasing the smooth expanse of his forehead. Most people overlooked that high intellectual forehead, seeing only the corpulence of his figure. There were men all over the country that knew the keen mind housed in the mountain of flesh exposed to the sight of common man,—men whose names were passwords into the inner sanctums of big business and politics. These men had reason to know that mind, for its scheming had been instrumental in placing them where they were today.

Ben smacked his lips over the last bite of toast and gulped the remainder

of his coffee and rose to his feet. Outside he retraced his steps to the telephone office and placed a call to St. Louis.

Then he climbed in his car and turned its nose back toward the airport. He had ordered machine guns with mounts and plenty of ammunition to be flown to Hawkins that afternoon. Less than an hour after his call an army truck left the St. Louis Arsenal for the airport.

Ben drove slowly, thinking. At the end of the business district Main street passed over Paw creek, its banks densely sheltered by thickets. He passed over the bridge leaving a trail of dust hanging lazily in the still air.

A round Mongolian face peered after him from its hiding place in the shrubbery, and a parchment yellow hand fingered the flat automatic in a shoulder holster. It would be easy to put a bullet in the back of Ben's head as his car glided slowly and smoothly along.

But Ben reached the gate of the airport still alive and completely unaware that only the vagaries of an oriental mind had stood between him and death.

The Mongolian watched until Ben had been lost to sight behind his self made screen of dust, then took a strange looking object from a plush lined silver case he had taken from his breast pocket and placed the object against his forehead.

After a moment the thing seemed to glow with a light of its own, as if it might be slightly more than red hot; yet he held it against the skin of his forehead with no sign of discomfort.

Major Clyde Williams of army intelligence sat across the table in the Oklahoma State Highway Patrol headquarters idly dangling a similar object between his thumb and forefinger while he talked to Captain Hyslop. He dropped it suddenly with an exclamation

that was half pain and half fear, then whistled in amazement that he could feel fear without knowing what to be afraid of.

On impulse he picked the thing up off the floor.

For no accountable reason he placed it against his forehead. Immediately a flood of thoughts began to emerge in his mind. From their very forcefulness and clarity they could not possibly be imagination.

Excitedly Major Williams motioned for Captain Hyslop to take one of the others of the things taken from the bodies of the slain Mongolians in those two cars and place it to his forehead.

Both men sat still, listening to the flood of thoughts. Finally it ended and the things again became just two strangely designed pieces of flat jewelry.

"Did you have a flood of strange thoughts?" Major Williams asked.

"I sure did!" Captain Hyslop exclaimed.

"All right," Major Williams said. "Let's both write down what they were and then compare notes. If they agree, we have stumbled onto something we never thought possible."

"That's a good idea," Captain Hyslop agreed. "You take that typewriter over there in the corner. You'll find plenty of paper in the upper right hand drawer. Maybe we'd better make carbons,—a couple of them, so I can keep a set, you can have one, and we'll have another set to spare."

Major Williams put some paper in the typewriter and began to put down the "message" he had intercepted. His trained memory brought it out word for word.

Los Angeles central. (Repeated many times.) Los Angeles ready. Go ahead. Seventeen. Sole survivor. Cars

gunned by loka. (Perhaps native word for plane.)

While cars were still moving I jumped. Fire concentrated on cars. I walked to edge of next town which turned out to be objective. Have been hiding out all day.

At eleven o'clock a known agent drove into town and parked in front of telephone office. Later went into cafe. Then returned to telephone office. After that he went back the way he had come.

When it is dark I'll go out that way. I expect the road to lead to the airport.

Known agent is Hess, the fat one. Obviously his organization had spies along the road and detected our approach to Hawkins, and ordered our destruction. I think they do not know I escaped.

I don't dare appear in public because our race is nonexistent in Oklahoma and I would be picked up for questioning.

Could have killed agent but decided to report for instructions. Can kill at any time.

(The "voice" now changed and was a little fainter,—probably the reply coming from Los Angeles.)

Check on calls shows Hess called Oklahoma patrol office first, then a number in St. Louis,—probably his central office there.

Try tonight to get loka. Do not kill Hess. It would delay things to discover new agent if he dies. We must have loka.

Take care you are not caught alive.

MAJOR WILLIAMS pulled what he had written from his typewriter and lit a cigarette while he waited for Captain Hyslop to finish.

When they compared what they had written they found both accounts substantially the same, although Captain

Hyslop had described his sensations and reactions along with the message, and given a brief account of the whole incident, including the explanation that Major Williams was writing an independent account, and the two would be compared.

They looked at the two gadgets laying on the desk. They looked like they had both come off the same assembly line. They were identical.

Each consisted of a ring of gold about an eighth of an inch wide and quite thin, the diameter of the ring being around two inches. Fastened inside this ring was a cross whose four arms were welded to the ring, the common point of the arms being half way between the center of the ring and its circumference. The smaller segment of the circle was filled in by a thin sheet of plastic in which a queer design in copper wire was imbedded.

"What d'you say we see if we can talk to each other through these things ourselves?" Captain Hyslop suggested.

The two men placed the things against their foreheads and closed their eyes. A full minute passed, then the things began to glow.

Each man jerked suddenly. The mysterious rings dropped from their fingers to the floor. Major Williams had been leaning slightly forward. His figure slumped still further, then fell out of the chair. It lay motionless where it had fallen. Captain Hyslop remained in his chair seemingly asleep. Both men were dead.

A fly droned restlessly about the office, its wing beat loud in the stillness of death. Five minutes went by. Ten minutes. Then a spiral of smoke rose from one of the typed reports the two dead men had made. All of them caught fire mysteriously. They burned slowly and carefully, not scorching the paint of the surface on which they lay.



The papers became a mass of
ashes and dust floating in the air



When they were nothing but fine ashes a gust of wind entered the room and formed small whirl pools over the ashen remains of the reports, lifting the ashes and distributing them as dust. No one saw it. No one would ever know that there had been such papers.

CHAPTER II

"**N**OW let's not be unrealistic about this thing." The speaker was a tall,—almost skinny, man, perhaps forty years old. He was dressed in clothes that might have come from some shop in the United States that very day. He was smoking a well known American brand of cigarette in a plastic holder with a copper band where the cigarette fitted so as to keep it from charring the plastic when it grew too short.

The only thing he had in common with the three silent men standing near him on the slowly descending elevator was his high cheek bones and parchment yellow skin. They, dressed in loosely fitting robes of heavy monks-cloth, stood motionless and patient, making no reply.

"In the United States before a prize fight both contenders make public announcements that go like this: 'I'll moider du bum in da foist round. It's a cinch.' Then when the fight takes place, naturally one of them turns out to be wrong.

"To make the analogy a little more complete, you might say both contenders are prophesying that they will fight, and both prophecy they will win. They're both right in their prophecy up to the point where they predict victory."

"You needn't make it any clearer," one of the listeners broke in, quietly. "My son, you are growing too much like an American. You presume no one

can be even with your childlike thoughts. We are way ahead of you."

"O.K., O.K.," the speaker said tolerantly. "Just the same, I'm telling you. Don't put too much confidence in the prophecy that our faction will win. The Christians have the same prophecy. So do a thousand other factions. They all agree there's going to be a fight, and a big one. And in the United States alone there have been several dozen brand new societies spring up overnight that claim to really be very ancient and honored societies which have come out of hiding for the 'last days,' to take over when the cataclysm takes place."

"We are not sitting back and relying on a prophecy," the other man replied firmly. "Why do you suppose we have preserved our vast libraries? Why do you suppose we have carefully preserved the flying machines and other instruments of Atlantis, Lemuria, and other places against this day?"

"I see," the first speaker said thoughtfully. "You have the advantage of being able to draw on the experience of all those civilizations for the present struggle, while America and any other nation you consider an enemy must combat this knowledge only with their inventive genius."

"You are correct," the second man said in his scholarly English. "Nevertheless, we must not discount that inventive genius. It is dangerous because it is unpredictable. Also we do not know the full extent of knowledge of the many ancient orders extant in Christian countries. The Masons, the Rosicrucians, the Jewish Church, and the Catholic Church may have many of the secrets we possess."

The serene expression on his smooth yellow face changed to bitterness.

"They should be our allies in this three cornered fight. Instead, religion has split us up into many weak groups,

each calling the rest infidels. Worst of all, in the Christian countries the idea of individual development of judgment has made those countries ripe for any colony of—you know whom. Already their ships have mapped the whole world and created discussion and speculation concerning the existence of extraterrestrial peoples.”

“And the revealed books given to mortals by the other great enemy,” a heretofore silent man interrupted, “Have taken the initiative from us to a large extent. No longer can we count on establishing our authority peacefully by means of Divine revelation. Our revelation is being sold over the counter in every book store in America and Europe for a pittance! It is being handed out in large chunks by hundreds of groups as being the Secret they have preserved down through the ages. The very numbers of these groups and their revelations has created undignified competition that will reduce us to the status of a cult when we come out in the open.”

“When we try to convince the world that its independence in the cosmos,—its continued existence as a power rather than a colony, depends on its holding together and fighting both of the supposed ‘owners’ of the Earth,” another of the small group supplied, “its peoples will not believe us until it is too late. Then where will we be? We’ll be in labor battalions saying ‘Yes, Master. No, Master.’ Bah!”

THE four men, one dressed like an American and the other three dressed like monks, suddenly froze. Their faces assumed a common expression of mingled fear, awe, and surprise. A “voice” was impinging on their minds.

“You are men of little minds,” the voice said, speaking in a Mongolian

tongue which Occidental scholars would have been surprised to know was still spoken by anyone. “If our cause depended on you for its strategy we would be foredoomed to failure. Know you not that we ARE the rulers of Earth? EVEN OF ROME? EVEN OF THE GODLESS?”

“But,—but HOW?” the American-dressed man sputtered.

“That is why you have been sent for,” the voice replied. “You will see me.”

“At last,” the man muttered. “I, Charlie Wong of Los Angeles, will be one of the chosen.” There was a look of wondering amazement in his Oriental eyes.

The three monks bowed low to him in a gesture of congratulation and drew to one side of the lift. In America this would have been considered an affront, but here in the central heart of Asia it was a sign that the three considered themselves unworthy to be in the presence of one who was soon to be of the Great.

The elevator continued its slow descent for another half hour, held in place and lowered gently by the coil magnets placed in the solid rock of the shaft. An elevator suspended by cables would have been an impossibility because of the four mile drop.

Not only that, the elevator had been in operation long before steel cables were being made,—long before Columbus crossed the Atlantic; and electromagnets raised and lowered it through the four miles of solid rock long before the first electrolyte cell was used by Galvani to produce a twitching in frog-legs.

When finally the elevator came to rest at the bottom of the shaft, the four men had to wait while a solid wall immediately in front of them moved upward, its moving face fitting so closely

to the side walls of the corridor from the elevator that not even a paper thin object could be pushed into the crack.

At last there was a break in the slowly rising wall. The break rose until the corridor seemed continuous. Charlie Wong watched for the second line in the corridor that would indicate how thick the piece was that had been raised. He walked nearly fifty feet before reaching it. The barrier between the outside and this strange underground domain was a fifty foot thick section of solid stone, dropped and raised perhaps by water controlled by an hydraulic mechanism inside.

The reason was apparent. If, by some unforeseen cataclysmic accident, the elevator shaft were to fill with water, the four mile depth would create enormous pressure. The barrier was primarily there to withstand such pressures and keep the underground chambers from being flooded with water at crushing pressures.

The tunnel continued, seemingly endlessly. The air and walls seemed self-luminous. They didn't glow, yet light seemed to be uniformly present without having any source.

When at last the corridor ended, a scene was revealed which forced an exclamation of surprise from Charlie Wong's lips. It was a huge cavern whose floor must have covered several square miles. Its roof arched upward gracefully to become a flat ceiling at least a mile overhead.

There were streets and parks. The buildings were all gems of architecture, their spires and minarets seeming fragile and delicate from a distance.

Trees and shrubs grew in geometric arrangement. The green of carefully tended lawns was everywhere. Here and there could be seen a monk in the universal drab cloak, tending the parks or sweeping the streets. Nowhere

was there a sign of a child or a woman.

CHARLIE knew the reason for this. The underground city was not really a city. It was the center and hub of the affairs of men. No one came here until he had completed a long and arduous period of study and development. Perhaps he, Charlie, was the youngest man ever to enter this inner sanctum! And he was by no means young.

His youthfulness was an illusion created by the contrast of his fresh appearance with that of his guides, the three monks, and by his careless mannerisms that so closely aped those of the younger slice of American cities. Still, he was a few years under forty.

Born in San Francisco, he had early shown remarkable abilities which branched out into an omnivorous development rather than settling into one groove as he reached adulthood. In his late teens, when he was already making a reputation for himself as a scientist, he had uncovered the existence of a secret Oriental brotherhood which contained Chinese, Japanese, and all other yellow-skinned races.*

**(Author's note:—This secret organization exists all over the world, unsuspected by the white races. It includes not only Orientals but also all other races. All through history there are hints of its existence. Some of its members have become kings and rulers of powerful countries in the past and even today. The heads of many religious and occult societies belong to it. Often in the course of history its members have joined other societies and worked to the top to carry out plans of this secret organization, then dropped out when their mission was accomplished. More of their aims and purposes will become apparent as the story proceeds, and perhaps the reader will then see in known history a great*

deal of the evidence of their operations, —perhaps gaining a greater insight into present world history than the author DARES to give in so many words.)

Within a few months of his joining this secret society Charles Wong, the young skeptic and scientist, had forged ahead so ruthlessly and industriously that the more stolid members had risen up in arms and decided to hold a special meeting for the purpose of expelling him from their midst.

Into the minds of those attending this meeting had come a mysterious "voice" ordering them to desist and to devote their entire resources to developing Charles Wong. This voice seldom "spoke," yet when its orders were disobeyed disaster struck swiftly and fatally. Although Charlie had never learned of this order he soon discovered the change in his fellow members and took full advantage of it to become the unofficial ruler of the San Francisco branch of the society.

For several years he pursued his course of "development" loudly and violently, disregarding the feelings of his brothers. Their life was miserable but just bearable.

Then almost overnight he settled into a persistent mood of earnest study and cultivation of his better nature. His energy led him to study the national organization, and orders preceded him that gave him open sesame to the most secret of places.

By the time he was thirty-five he had become the unofficial ruler of the American branch of the secret society. And now he was to meet the supreme leader of them all, Master of the destiny of nations.

He accompanied his three guides as they followed the narrow street that led from the tunnel exit into the cavern city. They had walked nearly two miles, and the cavern ceiling hung far

overhead, when they paused at the entrance to a larger and more ornate structure.

A giant of a Mongolian stood on the bottom step waiting for them. Nearly seven feet tall, his muscular body appeared to weigh at least three hundred pounds. His yellow face was fat, and scanty patches of short black bristle spotted his smooth skin.

"Welcome, Rimpoche," he said, grinning broadly so that his lips stretched out to thin ribbons of red. "You are to come with me and I will show you your apartment."

Charlie Wong turned to say goodbye to his three guides and found them already walking back the way they had come. He opened his mouth as if to call to them, then shrugged his shoulders and turned to follow the giant.

From that moment on he met with nothing but surprises. He was escorted to a suite of five rooms which the giant told him was to be his. The suite might have been in any of the leading hotels in the United States so far as rugs, furniture, and every other detail was concerned.

THERE was even a modern cabinet radio-phonograph with a large collection of records, all new. Idly he wondered how a radio could pick up anything four miles under solid rock.

He turned it on to see if it really could, and soon found that by a twist of the dial he could get almost any station in the world. Yet it was only a standard store model of a well known radio!

Exploration disclosed a modern tile bathroom complete with shower. He tested it and found hot and cold water actually came out of the chrome-plated faucets.

Wandering back to the first room once more he noticed a modern desk

phone resting on a nice looking little desk in one corner. The phone book beside it told him that there was a local exchange through which he could order his meals or practically anything else he wished. It also told him that he could call any place in the world right from his room!

While he was inspecting the phone book the phone rang. He picked up the receiver. The voice at the other end said, "Mr. Wong?" He answered, "Yes."

"I am the chef," the voice explained. "I wish you to know that we are prepared to serve you any dish you can possibly imagine. All we ask is that you let us know what you wish and how you wish it prepared. I must confess that we have spent several months of study on your tastes in food in anticipation of your visit, so we feel sure you will enjoy your food while you are here."

"That's certainly very thoughtful of you," Charlie Wong said, immensely flattered at this touch. "However you will find my taste easy to satisfy. I AM hungry. I think I'd like nothing more than for you to pick out some dish I have never eaten, which you think really outstanding, and serve it. I like new experiences."

The chef assured him he would think of something out of this world. Charlie dropped the phone back in its cradle.

Almost at once it rang again. This time it was a voice quite familiar,—the same voice that had spoken in his mind while descending in the elevator.

"Mr. Wong," it said. "Since your stay here must be short, I will dine with you in your own-suite in half an hour."

"Fine!" Charlie replied. "I just ordered."

"I know," the voice answered, then hung up softly.

"Would you like me—" Charlie con-

tinued before realization sunk in that he was talking to a dead line.

Whistling, he crossed to the bathroom and undressed for a quick shower. When he took off his shirt he looked regretfully at the slight soil on the collar and wished for his bags which had been left in the monastery that covered the upper end of the elevator shaft. A sudden thought struck him.

He went into the bedroom and opened a dresser drawer. There, sure enough, was a neat pile of shirts!

A hasty exploration proved that his bags had come down faster than he, and had been unpacked. The empty bags reposed on the floor of the closet. So there WAS a faster way of getting down here!

RESUMING his whistling he finished undressing and took his shower. He had just donned his suit coat and noticed that all the suits in his bags had been pressed before being hung in the closet when there sounded a knock at the door.

It was the chef in person accompanied by two monks who wheeled carts with silver trays on them. These were loaded with dishes covered by silver domes.

While the chef, a Frenchman who appeared to be in his sixties, hovered over the two silent monks, they set a table with spotless linen and gleaming silverware. Crystal glassware and a fortune in Spode chinaware followed.

Charlie slowly extracted a cigarette from a gold case and inserted it in his holder and lit it while his eyes followed all this appreciatively.

When the chef, bowing rapidly, backed out of the door behind his two cohorts, Charlie smiled at them, his eyes glittering in excitement.

He still did not sit down. He stood waiting for the arrival of the fabulous

person that he had come all the way to the geographic center of Eurasia to meet. Nameless, yet with many names, powerful, yet seen by no one who would admit having seen him, the man who would come through that door in a minute or two was much more than just a leader of a world wide secret society.

The history of this man as taught in the inner chamber of the society recalled itself to Charlie's mind as he stood with his feet planted in the rich rug, his eyes on the door, waiting for the knock that would herald the arrival of his host.

He had been one of the first men born on Earth seventy-nine thousand years ago! Extremely intelligent, he had grasped the fact that unless he could gain the secret of the great race that had created Man, he would be discarded and die.

The scientists of this creating race had studied him and his fellow humans. He in turn had studied them, watching their experiments and the operation of their various mechanisms with stupid, dreamy eyes, which hid the keen analytical mind growing behind them.

On the surface he appeared nothing more than a normally unintelligent "first attempt," doing his chores that he had been careful to learn no more nor less rapidly than his fellows. Yet while he swept floors or cleaned up waste his eyes and ears missed nothing and his mind sifted and sorted, analyzing and understanding the principles involved.

He dared not attempt to gain the support of any of his fellows in the plans he was forming. He had to work alone.

One day he found an entrance to a deep cave that had never been discovered by the pre-race. It was not far

from the place where he had been born and was now being studied.

At night he stole the necessary instruments and mechanisms for his needs from the storerooms where unpacked duplicates of all instruments were kept for replacements.

Deep in his secret hideaway he set them up and learned to operate them, watching his masters to learn the points he was not sure of.

At last the day came when he was ready for the great adventure! He was already growing old and could not hope for many years more of life. He chose one of his many sons and took him to the secret laboratory he had set up.

Carefully following the directions he had learned, he took the great risk. He was successful. For one horrible second he had felt life slipping from him. Then he had opened his eyes and seen his old body slumped in unconsciousness beside him, and had looked at his hands and body and recognized them for those that had been his own son a few seconds before.

A MOMENT later the eyes of the old body opened and the terrified spirit within had looked at his hands and body, then fainted. Nothing more was needed to prove that there had been a transfer of souls.

Triumphantly he had killed his former body and carried it along a passage that led far up, emerging in the middle of the cliff. There he had thrown it onto the rocks far below where it would be found, crushed.

After that he had sealed up the cave and returned to the colony, wailing over the death of his "father" along with the rest of the family of seven wives and over a hundred children.

He had repeated this performance seven times, living out the adult life of seven different bodies, before he had

mastered all the science of the pre-race.

When they left to return to their native realm far from the planet Earth, he watched them go with a mocking light in his eyes. They had never suspected what he had done. If they had ever missed their spare machines they had kept silent, assuming that the savage humans had probably dragged them into the jungles and forgotten them, incapable of understanding them.

From then on his cautiously submerged ambitions had found unrestrained expression. Openly he formed his band of followers, never letting them in on the whole secret, yet performing the transfer that enabled them to live many lifetimes.

Always, when one of his followers became too ambitious, he saw to it that the transfer did not succeed. Thus, he retained his position of master.

Many thousands of years passed before the pre-race on their regular voyage of inspection discovered what he was doing. By then his organization numbered in the millions with only a few hundred of the inner circle receiving the transfer, and those only a few times.

When the pre-race found out they at once decided to destroy him. Yet how could they determine who he was? To do so they would have had to examine many millions of individuals, and even then they could not be entirely sure, even if he were one of those examined.

They knew this. Quickly they took specimens of the race and transported them to other lands all over the Earth so that the race they had created would continue. In hours they did this. Then they destroyed the continent upon which their original race of humans had been living for so long. In this

way they felt sure they could destroy him.

This procedure would surely have succeeded in destroying him except for two things that the pre-race overlooked. First, they assumed he would be occupying a place of great importance,—perhaps even as ruler of one of the several nations on the continent. Second, they assumed he could not learn of their scheme in time to save himself.

But long before that time he had tired of the roll of open ruler of any people. He left that position of hard work and constant danger to his followers. And his grapevine had been so perfected that he always knew within hours whatever went on any place on the continent that was out of the ordinary.

Consequently he had been able to leave the continent before the wall of force was set up around it. His boat containing most of his more irreplaceable equipment and several of his most trusted followers had been tossed up on the shore of what is now known as Asia by the huge tidal wave caused by the sinking of the mother continent.

It had been close, even at that. With most of his equipment lost or damaged beyond repair, he and his few followers had forged inland in search of mountains that might contain the necessary deposits of minerals.

Frantically they had worked, year after year, until at last when they were all dangerously old the mechanisms for transfer were again restored to operation.

EVEN then it cost three of his followers before the bugs in the machines were completely eliminated so that perfect transfer was affected.

After that he spent several lifetimes holing in. Now, unless the exact loca-

tion of his headquarters were discovered, it would be necessary to destroy the world itself to eliminate him, and perhaps even that wouldn't do it!

This was the man who would soon come through the door and give Charlie Wong a chance to meet him! A man who was seventy-nine thousand years old and who had successfully defied the unknown race that had created the human race so long ago! A man who was organizing his hosts all over the world in preparation for a great war to free the Earth from the bondage of this mysterious race;—or was it two races?

Charlie frowned in perplexity over this. Rumor had it that the main battle would be fought between two ancient races, each of which claimed sovereignty over the Earth, and that the Earth itself would have to conquer both.

A slight noise brought his attention back to reality. He glanced up quickly and saw a man standing in the open doorway, an enigmatical smile on his lips.

Charlie returned the smile, his eyes inspecting the man's appearance. He was as tall as Charlie, though better proportioned and more regular of features. From his appearance his body must have been of Hindu rather than Mongolian origin.

He carried a certain aura of quiet power and confidence, yet there was no sign of any great power, or anything that might indicate that here was the man who had lived seventy-nine thousand years.

His face and eyes expressionless except for the automatic smile, Charlie Wong bowed low in his best Oriental fashion, inviting his host to enter his magnificent suite that had been so thoughtfully provided for him.

Still without speaking, the man

stepped into the room and gave the door a gentle shove that caused it to close without banging.

"Are you really—He?" Charlie asked, awed.

"Yes," his host replied, seating himself at the table.

"To think that he is here beside me!" Charlie thought as he seated himself. "Why I could even kill him and end his thousands of years of existence!"

"Not while I can read your every thought and anticipate your every move," the man answered Charlie's unspoken thoughts. He lifted the silver cover off one of the plates and sniffed appreciatively at the delicious odors arising with the steam from the dish without looking at Charlie.

He set the cover carefully down on a tray while he added, "You see, Mr. Wong, I carefully select the bodies I inhabit so that I have all the faculties a human is capable of developing, including thought reading and muscular ability. I also like variety. I have been everything from a Negro to an Englishman. I have even been a woman! I could mention the names of some of the bodies I have inhabited and you would immediately recognize from their names that their outstanding abilities have been really my own work."

He delicately tasted one of the dishes and chewed the food thoughtfully.

"I might also add," he said, gesturing with his fork, "That even if you had been an enemy and had laid some trap for me which had succeeded in killing this body I could have succeeded in possessing another within a matter of a few moments, so that your success would have been only temporary."

"But I wouldn't even think of—" Charlie objected.

"But you did!" the host interrupted, smiling. "However, to set you at rest so you can enjoy your dinner, I know that you didn't think of it from the standpoint of doing it, but merely from the standpoint of illustrating to your mind the fact of my presence." He chuckled and continued eating with great relish.

Charlie followed his example and found that the cook had really proven why he was chef to the great leader of all humanity.

"Tell me," Charlie said, suddenly recalling the mystery of the radio. "How can an ordinary radio pick up broadcasts from all over the world down here?"

"It should be obvious," the host replied. "We have an antenna on the surface that leads down here. However, it isn't connected directly to your particular set. Instead, it runs into an all wave broadcaster which rebroadcasts all waves within the cavern at much greater intensities and without distortion."

The meal continued without further talking until it was over. The host prepared tea. Charlie Wong lighted a cigarette and settled back with an expectant light in his eyes. He knew he hadn't long to wait now before learning WHY he had been sent for.

The host sensed his eagerness and smiled.

"Perhaps the main reason you are here," he began, "is to acquaint you with the history behind modern history, so that you, as the supreme leader of our organization in North America, can understand the true meaning of current events."

Charlie blinked his eyes but did not otherwise betray his emotions. The flash of admiration in his host's eyes at the way he took the momentous announcement made him feel flattered.

"IN THE year eighteen forty-eight," the host began quietly, "After nearly two thousand years of having the stage to myself, the advance hordes of one of the two great cosmic civilization descended to begin the task of taking over. In order for you to understand why I would not welcome their coming I must try to show you a few of their plans for the Earth. To do that I must explain a little of their true nature.

"They aren't material in the sense that you and I are material, in having bodies. Neither are they like the spiritualists and occultists and the world religions picture them. As a scientist, let me present you with a problem in chemistry. Suppose that in some chemical process a substance were produced which defied all methods of chemical analysis. Suppose further that the process by which this substance were produced was of such a delicate nature that it were impossible to determine the exact quantities of substances that entered into it, or even what those substances were, except for a few, like carbon and oxygen and hydrogen, with only a probability of any of a list of other elements. If, further, this substance, whatever it is, did not behave like any other substance,—in short, possessed intelligence, memory, will, imagination, and identity, then if no known agent could destroy it and break it up into its components it would be forever beyond the ability of any being to state its composition.

"This essentially is a member of this first great cosmic group. Each individual originated in some person or some intelligent animal on some planet. The mutation process for producing a true race of creatures having 'souls' is well known to them. It is also well known to the other great group.

"Now here is where the great differ-

ence lies between the two groups. The former asserts that there is a form of existence other than the material, and that the 'soul' is a structure of a spiritual substance rather than a material one. In fact, so full of error is their science and philosophy, and so consistently constructed, that it would be impossible to ever prove to them that they are wrong.

"The platform upon which they stand, speaking politically, is that since all humans must eventually become as they, then everything leading up to the moment when a person becomes as they are is of no real importance.

"The second great group is that of the living cosmic civilization. They believe as I do that the soul is nothing more than a supermolecule of some sort, and that the ideal goal is a civilization of living people with machines and full development in life. They respect life and try to raise the intelligent life on a planet to a state of science where it can become a full fledged member of the cosmic horde.

"THEY CREATED THE HUMAN RACE. I know because I was one of their first creations. They did better than they knew when they made me.

"Yet, although the living galactic empire should have the right to call the Earth races their property by right of creation, I strongly suspect that they merely jumped the gun on the other race, and that the other race MADE THE EARTH and prepared it over a period of millions of years for the day when they would people it with intelligent races which would add to their cosmic hosts with a few trillions or quadrillions of recruits. So, because they created the Earth in the first place, perhaps they have a moral right to claim the people of Earth as their property.

"As far as property rights are con-

cerned, if I were to sit as judge on the two galactic empires I would decide that it was a draw.

"How about other rights? There is first the judging of their two opposing theoretical pictures of the nature of reality and of the human soul. The Ethereans, as the so called spiritual empire is called believe in a spiritual plane or planes analogous to a fourth dimension, but pictured as a vibratory plane. They picture the entire cosmos as being a Supreme Being. They have built up a theoretical picture that agrees with every possible test experiment, and are able to manipulate the forces of the universe like putty, creating and destroying worlds and universes, creating life and guiding its evolutionary development. Their picture can't be refuted.

"On the other hand, the living races that make up the cosmic empire of the Titans have what modern thought would call a purely mechanistic concept of the universe, recognizing it as a Whole but not as a Deity. They too can manipulate the forces of the cosmos, creating and destroying worlds with ease, creating and moulding life with perhaps more ease than the Ethereans. *Their* picture can't be refuted.

"So again we have a draw.

"How about morals and ethics? How about the qualities called Good and Evil? From their own standpoint both sides are right and the other side wrong. The living race says that murder and death are evil because they consider life as the prime Good. The dead consider death as merely a graduation from the school of the flesh, so to them death is of no real importance. They can and do commit wholesale slaughter just to gain recruits, though not so baldly as I have stated it.

"The Evil and the Good of them both can be lined up side by side and

seen to be purely relative and fortuitous,—more like the political platforms of two parties than the expression of some Divine and Absolute scale of values.

"Yet only here can we pick sides if we are forced to choose. The trouble is that before the average human could choose intelligently he would have to know something about the things I have been telling you, and naturally, his teacher will belong to one or the other faction and shape his beliefs to determine a favorable vote in his direction! There can be no impartial and absolutely right position. If there were, then one or the other of the two great galactic empires would have won out over the other countless billions of years ago, long before the Earth came into existence!

"**Y**OU'D be surprised at the subtleties and subterfuges both arch enemies use against one another and against a young race like ours in their struggle to see which claims the planet for his own. There is so much of science undreamed of by even the maddest of the mad, which they employ much as we would employ the rudiments of our science. To back it up, both have the experience and history of billions of years to draw on. They can figure out the final effects of an incident on the whole Earth much as a good chess player can figure out several future moves in a chess game. They can create incidents, manipulate public belief, and judiciously steer our nations in any direction they desire. But so can I. I am the fly in their ointment and they don't even suspect I exist!

"I'll tell you a few of the things they have done, and my countermoves, just to give you an overall picture, so it can be filled in more completely later.

"As I said, in 1848 the Ethereans

arrived to lay their plans for the final battle. Firm believers in percentage, they began thousands of supposedly competing schemes. They began creating psychic evidence for the proof of survival after death. They wrote many inspired books calculated to appeal to every type of mind. They made mediums and mystics by the thousands and provided plenty of evidence to make them genuine. They laid the groundwork for hundreds of different societies, each of which would claim that they alone were the representative of Divine Authority.

"They had to clear out huge organizations of the dead which were controlling the affairs of the world to a great extent. They did this by carrying off the dead and leaving the living without the wise council of their astral backers.

"In this way they expected the huge groups that had flourished for centuries to collapse, for they didn't think any man in one lifetime could become wise enough to avoid the things that would lead an organization onto the rocks.

"They had no intention of taking the world as it was. They planned that most of mankind should reduce itself by devastating wars to a point where there would be no organization and government. Then they would start over from scratch.

"They had no intention of letting science gain a foothold. Their plan was to develop a civilization of small communities which devoted all their time except for the labor of existence to development of religious discipline and purely psychic development. All other trends were to be destroyed by keeping their adherents in a continual state of war and bloodshed.

"A simple plan, and very effective. Yet to my mind they made several bad mistakes. They are too prone to kill

off the opposition rather than capture it and make it an ally.

"I kept watch and sabotaged their plans on every front where I was able. They in turn mistook my work for that of secret organizations of the dead which they had missed. There were enough of these to make them think their conclusion accounted for all the sabotage of their efforts. I put out a few books of 'inspirational' authority myself. In wars I brought sanity and peace where they had counted on total weakening of the nations involved.

"Then, in 1890 the Titans returned! Rather, it was not the Titans in the flesh, but their hosts of dead which believe in the Titan philosophy which stresses the roll of the living. The Titans themselves cannot come until the world is theirs and a treaty has been drawn up to that effect so that the Ethereans respect the Earth as a Titan dominion. Yes, that is done. Otherwise there would be perpetual war throughout the galaxy and there could be no sane development of either civilization. Except for the fight for a new world both civilizations remain at peace, though not a friendly peace where the peoples of both intermingle.

"These Titan hosts at once began their program of development of science. It began with a bang. Look at your history of science. You will find that all major developments began in 1900 or 1901. Until then development was sporadic and slow. There were dozens,—hundreds, of isolated cases of experimentation. Suddenly these cases whose records lay on university book shelves gathering dust were taken down by keen minds and used to form all the modern branches of science.

"**M**ASS production and replaceable parts, — standardization, were brought into industry. Material-

ism gained more and more ground in both the school system and the churches. One by one the mysteries of the universe were reduced to understandable terms, and made available to man by machine and other devices.

"In this stage of the battle both sides are on equal grounds because the fighters are all dead. None of THEM can become casualties.

"The Germans were chosen by the Titans as their main instrument. As a race they were more naturally rigorous and scientific in their thinking than almost any other race, and they had the added quality of almost infinite persistence.

"The Titans inspired the Germans to conquer the world. That was World War I. The Ethereans turned the Titans' weapons against them and defeated them. To do so they had to suffer a major setback because they had to inspire the Americans to build better weapons.

"When the Titans realized this first skirmish was doomed to failure they dropped it, letting the Germans sue for an early peace. In that way they won the peace because the humanities that the Ethereans had instilled in the Americans in order to win them over quickly prevented them from going in and completely wiping out the Germans.

"The Titans switched their operations to Russia. Here was a vast population of people who could be made into an undefeatable nation.

"You can trace the history of the intrigue of both sides throughout the whole Russian rise from savagry to civilization. The Titans had to resort to Etherean strategy of eliminating the opposition. When the first success of revolution swept the communists to power the Ethereans tried to weaken them by inspiring them to carry their

revolution into China. This was defeated.

"Meanwhile the struggle was going on evenly throughout the rest of the world. In America and the British Empire science and sanity kept even pace with occultism and religion. For every new discovery in science a new cult sprang up and gained a few hundred or thousand devotees.

"And quietly and carefully I was inserting my own followers in key places. In Japan which had always been 100 per cent mine I suffered a major setback. The Ethereans raised up a war faction which gained control. I could have prevented it, but only at the expense of revealing my existence. That would have been suicide, because my only hope of victory is for the Ethereans and Titans to remain ignorant of me until the final day of settling. More of that later.

"THE Ethereans, realizing their work in Russia was failing, (due largely to the atheistic campaign which was causing more and more of the Russians to ignore inspiration, and killing off most of those who did obey inspiration and acted on it), decided to precipitate a major conflict before the Titans were prepared for it.

"Yes, Hitler was theirs. But so also were Churchill and Roosevelt. They planned on reducing the world to complete chaos.

"The Ethereans had the advantage in that they sought no victory for any side. Rather they planned on reducing the world to isolated colonies who would abhor not so much war as science, and would become convinced that the only sure road to peace was to return to the soil and develop only the spiritual side of man.

"The Titans were at a disadvantage in that they were fighting to preserve

civilization and science, their major weapons and the prerequisites for admittance of the Earth into the civilization of the Titans.

"Hitler's mad turning against Russia is quite understandable when you know that. His persecution of the Jews is also understandable, because the Jews are one of the most intelligent races on Earth and their very religion speaks of the coming millenium as being scientific rather than spiritual in its major developments.

"In China and Inner Mongolia my own power held. I succeeded in stemming the Japanese march and so weakening them that they were defeated in their eastward march toward America. I was able to use what little power I had in Japan itself to prevent the pincers movement Hitler had ordered them to start when he invaded Russia.

"I also made my first open stop in the battle of Armageddon by announcing that if the war were not stopped I would step in. As you know, I made this announcement through my Mongolian fronts who pose as mystics and adepts to the outside world. I made this announcement, not because I even dreamed it would have the slightest effect on the progress of the war, but so that later I could use that announcement as a powerful weapon in my own battle against both the Ethereans and the Titans for the permanent independence of the Earth.

"In all this fighting of World War II both sides were gaining ground in one direction while losing it in others. The Titans succeeded in getting the United States to build the atom bomb. The Ethereans succeeded in getting the United Nations idea implanted firmly so that the groundwork of the third and final war could be securely laid.

"The Titans succeeded in laying the groundwork for experiment in inter-

planetary travel, though the Ethereans succeeded in killing everyone who managed to get the right idea on it. Percentage is in favor of the Titans there, while percentage is on the side of the Ethereans in the United Nations for the final war. In this present stage of shuffling the deck before the cards are dealt for the next hand I am finally dealing myself into the game in earnest.

"You see, the Titans' greatest present weapon is materialism coupled with science. Without actually denying the possibility of an immortal soul they still keep their human allies fixed on the *compulsion of not accepting anything not proven*. In the sciences of the mind they manage to hold the fort admirably with experimental psychology and an attitude of universal skepticism, coupled with an intellectual religious viewpoint which allows men to admit the possibility of a Supreme Something. Their greatest strength would be weakened if someone would come forth with a radio-like device with which to communicate with the dead without the necessity of a medium who is always vulnerable to the explanations of fraud or schisophrenia.

"On the other hand, the Ethereans dare not allow such a machine because, though it would prove survival after death with complete scientific exactness, it would work equally for the dead Titan hosts at work here, and they could eventually nullify any program for outlawing science that the Ethereans might promulgate, on the grounds that if it were not for that science survival would have always remained beyond proof. Direct and positive contact between the dead and the living would tend to work against the Ethereans in the final analysis of the situation.

"NOW, the greatest present weapon of the Ethereans is the existence of widely spread "revealed" books which give most of the truth of the Ethereans' side of the thing. The followers of the teachings of these books number better than half of the world's population, and by followers I mean active followers,—not those who passively accept them. This gives the Ethereans a great hold on the public in several ways, the most important of which is in instilling the conviction that obedience to the dictates of the Etherian representatives is obedience to the Divine Creator of the Earth and the universe and everything in it. The instillation of that belief is the main strength of all religious and esoteric movements. It is analogous to the patriotic propaganda of nations to make them fight for their country, right or wrong.

"It is fundamentally right, and errs only in the assertion that some particular representative is the One authoritative source of the Divine Command.

"You are wondering how I, even with the support of the whole Earth in a united front could stalemate and thus defeat two galactic empires whose members number in the septillions and octillions, and each of which could destroy the Earth tomorrow if they chose. You're also wondering WHY I choose to fight both of them rather than joining with one.

"My strategy must remain secret for the time being, I can only say that I stand at least an equal chance of succeeding. I can be perfectly frank on the why, though, and on the answer to that I rest my case and appeal for your loyalty and cooperation with me.

"I have known all these events would come for many thousands of years. I've studied every angle, and I think that BOTH THE ETHEREANS AND

THE TITANS ARE WRONG.

"If either side wins we will be merged into their empire and receive the full blast of their philosophy so that creative thought will cease. I will of course be confined forever as too dangerous to be allowed to roam free. Attempts to disrupt my personality might be successful. Then I would be harmless.

"But if we succeed in sending away the two invading empires and are permitted a few more thousand years of development,—who can tell? If I can discover the error in the logic of the Ethereans and the Titans which would destroy their relativism, and find the basic ground that would resolve their quarrel, then Armageddon would end forever, and worlds would no longer know war. The true millenium for all the universe would come. It might take eternities to accomplish, but once on the right track the civilization of Earth could spread out and make the battle three sided on all new planets, with us winning the majority of the prizes! And without our signature on old treaties we would not have to respect them. We could spread out and include ALL."

The Hindu sat back with a smile on his dark brown, handsome face. But his eyes were keenly searching in their gaze, and his highly developed telepathic sense probed into Charlie Wong's mind for the slightest thought that might indicate how much or how little of all he had said Charlie accepted as true.

After nearly five minutes of silence Charlie asked a question.

"In what way," he asked, "do you think both the Ethereans and the Titans wrong?"

"There is an old saying," the host answered, "that nature abhors a vacuum. It might better be said that

nature abhors a vacuum in possibilities. In the infinite vastness of the cosmos, not only are all things possible; all things ARE. There are two huge unreconcilable galactic civilizations because each of them turns its back on some aspect of possibility. That follows, because, since both of them exist, both are possible. Since they aren't both identical they each deny part of reality, regardless of the details.

"Now, as you know, logic is a very subtle tool. You might infer from the conclusion I just gave that since each of them denies a part of reality, both of them together accept all of reality. Do you get the unobtrusive point now? There must be a part of reality that they BOTH have missed,—that both deny, because UNDOUBTEDLY EACH IS THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH EVERY DETAIL OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE OTHER AND REJECTS SOME PART OF IT."

"DO YOU," Charlie asked, "have any definite clue to the part they both have missed?"

"Much more than a clue," the host answered. "Perhaps if you serve me well in the part you are about to play you will have a chance to play a big part in the future development of the world. Then we can discuss this further."

"And what is the part I am to play?" Charlie Wong asked softly. For the answer to this question he had come all the way from Los Angeles, deep into the heart of Eurasia.

"For the next two days you must memorize the faces, names, and history of a great many men and women. Some of them are our friends, some our tools, and some our enemies on both sides. You must know them. When that is done I will see you again and

discuss the events of the coming year."

The host rose as he was talking. When he finished he went to the door. There he turned.

"You must engrave those faces and what they mean on your soul, because **EVEN IF YOU DIE** you must complete your tasks."

With that he left.

Charlie stared at the closed door thoughtfully. Already, now that his mind reading host was gone, his active mind was trying to guess what thing both the Titans and the Ethereans might have missed.

His mind was seething with excitement. His knowledge of recent history was already clicking away, resorting its conclusions to accommodate the new facts he had learned.

But dominant in his thinking was the problem of what two super civilizations could have missed. The Ethereans based their battle on the assertion that since normally life was relatively but an initial moment in the infinity of an individual's existence, it was less important than the powers of the soul. The Titans based their battle on the premise that since near-immortality of the body could be achieved, the life of the living was the more important, and science and machines were the things to be stressed.

His nameless host, the man who had lived in a succession of bodies for seventy-nine thousand years, had achieved immortality by transfer of his soul by means of a machine. Was this the answer? Perhaps a race of soulless creatures which could be used for flesh immortality, so that it would not be necessary to steal the body of some helpless soul for the transfer? But no, that could not be it. That would just be doing what the Titans did, but in an inferior manner.

Could it be a union of the Titan and

the Etherean civilizations? Hardly. Both the great civilizations did that. The Ethereans strived for that on the planets they won. So did the Titans.

Charlie shelved the problem for the time being. Perhaps an answer would come to him, though he wasn't so sure.

There was a discrete knock at the door. It was a monk with a wheeled table upon which were files containing the pictures and data he was to memorize.

Charlie's fingers rifled the cards in the file marked TITANS. His eyes widened as they came to rest on a certain name. Slowly he lifted a card out. The fat face of Benjamin Hess smiled up at him jovially.

CHAPTER III

"**BOY** oh boy! You must have some drag with the government to get these," Alex said, his eyes gleaming with pleasure while his fingers caressed the gleaming machine guns.

"Not at all," Ben said with a shrug of his massive shoulders. "It just so happened that I acquired a few of them with some other army surplus items, and thought they might come in handy. It's possible that whoever machine-gunned that car full of Orientals might still be around. We wouldn't want to have your ship stolen."

"Put your welding clothes on sis," Alex said to Louise. "We've got to make mounts for these on the ship. The sooner the quicker, as my sergeant used to say."

Ben turned away with a silent smile on his face. Fred had been looking on silently, and didn't miss this. It made him wonder. Perhaps Ben was really someone high up in the government instead of just a capitalist. Whether that were true or not it was obvious that Ben was looking out for the best in-

terests of Alex and his sister so far, and that made him tops so far as Fred was concerned.

"Maybe we'd better set up a couple of these guns where they can command all approaches to the hangar until we're ready to go into the air," he suggested to Alex.

"That's a swell idea, Fred," Alex agreed. "It may take a couple of days to get the mounts on the ship and the guns lined up so that they can be fired from the control panel."

"We can't have them in plain sight," Fred said. "The natives would see them and start talking. Let's see now. You could cut a slit in one of the sections of the hangar doors. That would command the field itself."

"We ought to have one on the roof," Alex cut in. "That way, if we were attacked by a plane we might be able to bring it down. I know just the place for that,—on the flat office roof. We can get at it from the hangar, too. That way we can get it up without anybody seeing us, and also get to it if we are attacked."

The Mongolian cursed under his breath as a car went by on the dusty road. He thought longingly of the coolness of the river back at the edge of town and wished he were there instead of in the ditch across the road from the abandoned army airport.

He had seen the private plane come in and unload several oblong wooden boxes, and take off again. From his vantage point he could see the boxes loaded one at a time on the jeep and be taken into the hangar. They were heavy, whatever they were.

He wished he knew what they were planning on doing from the Los Angeles end, but when he had asked he had been told that it was too dangerous to tell them because several of the thought sets were in the hands of the

state police. So he had to content himself with staying where he was and report all that he saw, and wish for a cool drink rather than get one. Anyway, if he did not stay where he was, he would be picked up at once for questioning by the state police in connection with the death of his fellow countrymen in the cars on the highway.

When darkness fell he planned on scaling the fence and creeping close to the hangar where he could see what was going on inside.

The sun hung low in the west already. It wouldn't be long now. He glanced at it, as if his gaze could make the sun go down faster. A dark cloud hung on the edge of the horizon. As he watched, its forward edge touched the sun, seemed about to melt away from the heat, then boldly marched across the fiery disk and quenched its flame.

The crouching Mongolian breathed a sigh of relief.

THE lights inside the hangar became brighter than the light of the sinking sun and painted the hangar windows with a yellow luminosity that soon began to shed its rays on the ground nearby.

There were huge flood lights around the airport buildings, but these remained dark. So much the better. It would be easy to sneak up close and peek through a window.

Now that the gloom lessened danger of discovery from the road the Mongolian took a heavy forty-five automatic from his shoulder holster and inspected it, making sure there was a bullet in the firing chamber and that the clip was full. He also made sure that the two spare clips in his coat pockets were not caught on anything. It might be necessary to get one of them out in a hurry.

After placing the strange metal band to his forehead and signalling Los Angeles that he was going in closer he left his place of concealment and climbed over the fence. On the other side he flattened against the ground and waited for several minutes to see if he had been discovered. It was possible that there was some sort of alarm system hooked up with the fence, although he had been careful not to touch the wire while standing on the ground.

It was a strong fence, and he had jumped in the air before touching it, in case it were charged. Finally, satisfied that his entrance to the field had gone unobserved, he rose to a half crouching position and crept toward the cluster of buildings.

"Oh, Ben," Louise called, opening the door to the former office now used as a kitchen.

Ben looked up from the salad plate he had prepared and already half consumed. A bit of lettuce clung to one corner of his moving jaws. He frowned at the interruption. The salad, consisting of two heads of lettuce, four large tomatoes, a cucumber, three hard boiled eggs, and a quarter pint of salad dressing, had been soothing his troubled mind, and he would rather have been allowed to finish it in peace.

Louise presented a pretty though incongruous appearance, standing in the doorway. Her face was flushed from exertion, with a dirt streak on one cheek.

Her figure was made dumpy and cute in a distinctly feminine way by the shapeless welding leathers.

Ben smiled at her and kept on mas-ticating.

"The guns are installed," Louise added. "We could take off any minute now."

Ben swallowed.

"Good," he answered. "To my way

of thinking the sooner the better. What does your brother think?"

"You just want us to get off the field so you can sell it," Louise pouted. "I thought you had begun to like us."

"Get you off the field!" Ben exclaimed. "Hah! I'm going along."

He took another bite of the salad and chewed it stubbornly, trying to give the impression of an irresistible force, — or rather, an immoveable object.

"But will the plane carry you?" Louise asked hastily. "I—I mean, will it carry all of us? After all, one of us should stay on the ground in case something happens, so the plans won't be lost to the government. This is something pretty important, you know."

Ben chuckled throatily.

"My dear young lady," he said. "If the plane won't carry all of us you will have to stay on the ground. I'm going. Now tell your brother I think we should take off at once before morning. I own an airport near St. Louis where we can land secretly and get out of danger of mysterious planes that machine-gun helpless Chinese laundrymen, or whatever they were, in cars on the highway. Obviously they were just practicing before taking a shot at us."

"Oh, you think so?" Louise said anxiously. "It does seem funny, doesn't it. Shooting a car full of Chinese. And what were they doing on the highway, anyway? I'll go see what Alex is going to do. Maybe we should take off tonight if we can."

Ben took another bite of his salad and sighed with relief that the interruption was temporarily postponed.

Louise found her brother pulling off his leathers. Fred was with him.

"Ben says we should take the ship up tonight," Louise interrupted their conversation. "He says he has an air-

port near St. Louis where we can hide it and be out of danger from that mysterious plane that shot up that car full of chinamen the other night."

Alex looked knowingly at Fred.

"Maybe it would be a good idea," Fred suggested slowly.

"Why not?" Alex agreed. "We're all ready to go. That airport near St. Louis sounds like a safe bet. For when we get back, I mean."

"Get primed up, sis," Alex said to his sister. "We're on our way."

"Will—will it hold all of us?" she asked doubtfully. "I mean—"

"Sure it'll hold all of us," Alex laughed.

LOUISE half ran toward the part of the building where her room was.

Fred and Alex watched her go and chuckled.

"Sis is some girl," Alex said. "Sometimes I wish she weren't my sister."

"You're lucky to have a sister like her," Fred said softly "Wish I had."

"Hey," Alex chided. "I thought you were a woman hater."

"Maybe I'm getting over it," Fred said gruffly. "I'll go tell Ben to get his things on board. Maybe he'll want to eat something before we start. Come to think of it I'm hungry myself. How about you?"

"Let's rattle up a bite," Alex said. "Sis won't have time."

The two men moved across the hangar toward the kitchen.

Outside, a yellow face pressed against the window and watched them depart, with a satisfied gleam in its large eyes.

As they disappeared through the doorway leading into the office building the yellow face ducked out of sight.

The Mongolian had sunk down in the weeds while he contacted Los Angeles. Placing the mysterious large ring

to his forehead he waited until he had established contact, then told what he had heard.

This time orders came through. He was to get on board somehow.

He slipped the ring back in his pocket and crept silently around the building to the hangar doors. As he had hoped, one of them contained an ordinary door, unlocked.

Opening it cautiously he peered inside. No one could be seen. He opened the door further and stepped in, ready to run or shoot at a moments notice.

Voices came through an open doorway across the hangar.

The hatch in the bottom of the ship was open and a short flight of metal steps led into its interior.

The Mongolian took in the details of the shell with amazed eyes. It was like no other airplane he had ever seen. Then swiftly he darted across the space separating him from the opening into the ship and disappeared from sight.

He was none too soon. A split second after he disappeared the three men came into the hangar.

Fred went over to the switch that controlled the hangar doors and in a moment the rumble of their opening began.

Louise came into the hangar. She was wearing an attractive dress with a coat hanging over one arm, a suitcase dangling in the other hand.

She grinned excitedly at Fred and started across the floor to the ship.

Suddenly a roar sounded above the rumble of the opening doors. Simultaneous with this roar bits of the floor kicked up in spots.

"Down!" Ben Hess yelled frantically, suiting his actions to his words. He was oblivious of the fact that he presented almost as big a target laying flat as he did standing.

Momentarily the outline of a plane

showed through the now open hangar doors, then was gone.

"Into the plane. Quick!" Ben shouted, rising to his feet. "They'll be back in a minute."

He heroically waited at the foot of the steps until the others got past him.

Alex ran up to the pilot's seat and started the generators. He peered anxiously through the view tubes trying to decide whether he would have time to get in the air and away before the attacking ship returned.

Impatiently he watched the needle on the meter marked H as it climbed toward a line marked on the dial. Fred, Louise and Ben had entered the pilot cabin and seated themselves, fastening safety straps about their middles.

Alex could see the rapidly moving dark shadow as it zoomed toward the field and the hangar. Viciously he jammed down on the thrust switch.

The ship moved forward with rapidly increasing speed.

HE CHUCKLED mirthlessly as the oncoming ship tried unsuccessfully to drop its nose so that its volley could catch the ship.

The four felt the lurch as the ship lifted into the air. So rapid was the acceleration that they were held pressed against the backs of their seats.

The needle on the speedometer reached the eight hundred mark. Without any perceptible lessening of acceleration the speed continued upward; but a new sound came into existence. It was a high whine accompanied by a slight vibration.

Louise watched the speedometer needle. It passed the thousand mark.

"Slow down, Alex," she said anxiously. "We've lost them by now, surely."

Alex turned his head and grinned broadly at his sister.

"We're just crawling compared to

what we will be doing in another half hour," he said. "We're going out into space."

Louise, her mouth hanging open, looked from Alex to Fred. On Fred's face was a quiet smile that confirmed what Alex had said.

Ben had emitted a grunt of surprise. Then a look of almost peaceful contentment spread over him. He folded his hands across his middle and relaxed.

"Well, I never," Louise said. "Why didn't you tell me that's where we're going, Alex?" she demanded.

"You're sure the seams will hold?" Ben asked. "And how about replenishment of air?"

"This ship is designed for stratosphere flying," Fred said. "There's enough oxygen in the tanks for a week. We won't go out far. Maybe to the moon and back. Maybe just out a few hundred miles. Alex just wants to see what it will do."

"A few hundred miles is enough," Ben muttered.

"What did you say?" Fred asked.

"Nothing. Just mumbling to myself," Ben answered. He closed his eyes and seemed to go to sleep.

Louise undid her safety strap and attempted to rise from her seat. The acceleration held her fast.

"What do you want?" Fred asked. "Better stay where you are."

"I—I'm scared," Louise said, smiling at him faintly.

Fred looked at the empty seat beside the one she was in.

"Brother, you're going to get into trouble if you don't watch out," his mind said to him.

"Nuts," he said back to it.

It took all his strength to get out of his seat and over to the empty one beside Louise. There he let the acceleration take him in its grip and push him.

down.

Louise took his hand and gripped it tightly for a moment.

"Feel better now, Louise?" he asked, laughing to cover his embarrassment.

"Mm HMM!" she said positively.

She slid over a little so that her shoulder just touched his.

He thought of the girl back home that couldn't stand him when he was nearly broke. Somehow the comparison seemed ludicrous. He shoved it out of his mind and leaned so that his shoulder rested with comforting pressure against hers.

Alex, looking through a mirror above the instrument panel, smiled to himself.

Ben, his eyes still seemingly closed, smiled as if he too had seen this incident. Yet how could he have seen it if his eyes were shut?

Alex noticed Ben's smile and closed eyes.

"He looks just like a fat, squatting Buddha," he thought to himself. "Maybe he is!"

The thought amused him. He chuckled silently. The speedometer needle crept past the five thousand mark. He put his eye to one of the view tubes.

Outside the Earth's surface was far below, the horizon curving like the edge of a sphere now, more than a circle like it was when he was farther down. He estimated his altitude at more than fifty miles.

HE ADJUSTED the thrust of the stern plates to maintain the forward speed and increased the belly thrust potential to two-thirds full thrust. It would have to be cut down as the atmosphere diminished to the vanishing point, but right now the atmosphere above acted as a brake to the ship.

The disappearance of forward acceleration was a tremendous relief. Louise unfastened her safety belt and went up beside her brother Alex to look through the view tubes.

It was a strange, awe-inspiring sight. The earth spread out below in a bulging disk. To the west the sun hung just above the horizon, its fiery surface seething balefully. Above and to the north, south and east stars gleamed beadily in a nearly black field of velvet.

Her eyes turned back to the Earth, looking through the view tube that pointed straight down. (The eye piece of each view tube was vertical. Each tube went off a different angle so that the pilot could have an unobstructed view in every direction, though the other end of each view tube was merely a two inch in diameter lense set in the shell of the ship.)

The surface seemed a huge black onyx with streaks and patches of greys, with many luminous dots. The greys were clouds and the luminous dots were cities and towns, lit up in the dark. It was night down there, though the sun was climbing higher and higher into the heavens in the west from her vantage point in the rapidly rising ship.

She shifted again to the view tube that looked up. The stars were coldly brilliant,—much larger than in the night sky from the surface. As her eyes adjusted themselves to the greater light from the stars she began to notice stars larger than the others but glowing with a soft reddish glow. She became excited. Perhaps these were stars not visible from the Earth at all!

She concentrated on one of these large reddish yellow stars. It seemed several times larger than the brighter stars that studded the heavens. The one she was watching was not far from

a bright star. She tried to estimate how much brighter it was than the yellow one.

While she was trying to decide, the yellow star approached the brighter one. When it was still visibly separated from the bright one the bright one winked out.

The meaning of this brought a gasp of amazement from her lips. One of the two stars was moving! She thought of calling her brother's attention to it, then decided she didn't want to relinquish her post just yet.

AFTER a minute the bright star winked back into its place in the heavens. It crept toward the edge of the circle of vision. The reddish yellow star remained in its position in the view tube. It was keeping pace with their ship!

When Louise realized this she hastily told Alex about it. He looked, and soon confirmed her conclusion. It was undoubtedly another ship! And it used the same drive principle as their own! Not only that, there were at least a half dozen other ships keeping pace with them.

"Maybe we'd better go down," Louise suggested. "Maybe they are planning on attacking us when we get a little higher."

"I don't know," Alex objected. "I hate to give up this trial run to see if my ship can go out into space. What do you think, Mr. Hess?"

"If they were going to attack us they would have done so long ago," he said with a shrug. "For that matter, if we tried to land now they could drop down and destroy us. I suggest we keep going."

"I wonder who they could possibly be?" Fred asked. "Do you think the Russians could have ships like this one?"

"Nonsense!" Ben said hastily. "My own opinion is that they belong to some extra-terrestrial race. I think they must be friendly or they wouldn't have given Alex a chance to figure out how to build a similar ship. What do you think, Alex?"

"I'm inclined to agree with you," Alex answered thoughtfully. "I'm for going on."

"So am I," Fred agreed. "If we went down now I'd always wonder about them. It's better to find out."

"If they're going to contact us in some way they should do so pretty soon," Louise decided. "Why don't you change course, Alex, and see what they do?"

Alex changed his course in a long curve. The ships above changed with him, but some of them made sweeps in the direction of the original course, coming back again,—in an obvious attempt to get him back on his previous course.

Alex told the rest what they were doing.

"Why don't you do it?" Ben suggested.

"Wait a minute," Alex said, his eye glued to the view tube. "They're up to something." He watched for several minutes in silence.

"Ten of them have come into formation and form an arrow!" he finally said. "The arrow points in the old direction. I think I'll follow them now and see where they lead me."

Louise had been looking through the port view tube.

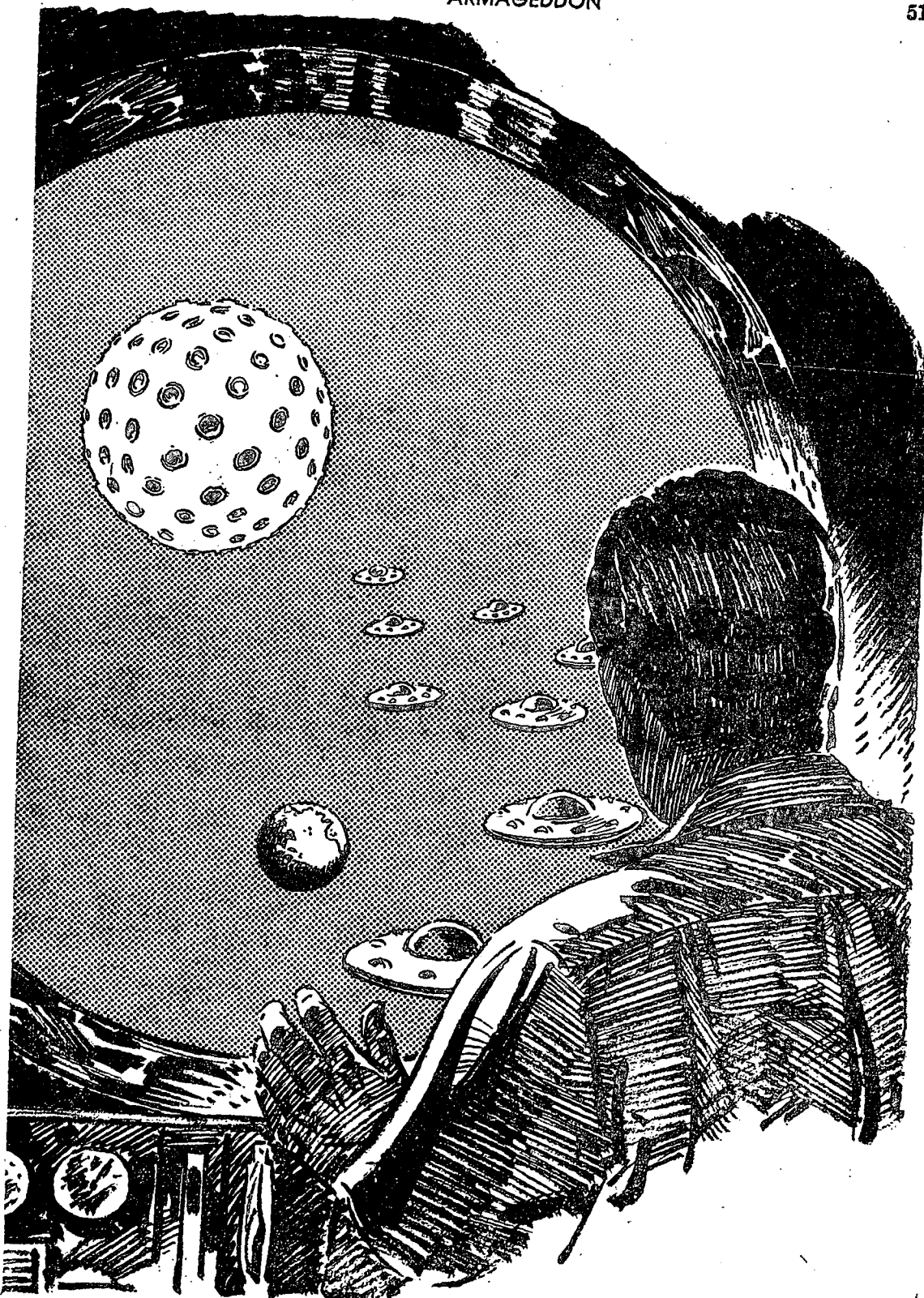
"There's an arrow forming over here, too," she said. "It's pointing slightly upward."

Alex changed his course, following the arrows formed by the accompanying ships.

After a while the moon came up in the east,—a gigantic brilliant orb

It became evident that the huge globe was man-made. It was a huge spaceship, so large as to be almost inconceivable!





larger than the sun. The Earth was now a huge globe that covered nearly all the space below the ship and was beginning to look like a very ragged quarter moon.

Fred looked at it and did some quick figuring.

"We're up over two thousand miles now!" he announced.

Soon after, the arrow formation on the left changed to point straight upward.

Alex glanced doubtfully at the accelerometer and saw to his surprise that the upward acceleration was not any greater than it had been. He had thought that once out of the braking action of the atmosphere it would increase.

He increased the thrust potential on the belly plates. The ship responded at once.

A half hour later a small moon grew visible ahead. Fifteen minutes later it had become obvious that this growing sphere must be their destination.

The arrow formations shifted so that the arms were at the other end. Alex turned off the thrust switch and let the ship coast.

Larger and larger loomed the small moon. Finally they could see details of its surface. These details were not the accidental characteristics of the surface of a satellite. They were regular and manmade. The truth was evident. Instead of being a small moon this was some sort of super ship,—a gigantic space ship!

EVEN Ben rose from the seat he was so firmly planted in to go to the instrument panel and look at it. There was a strange light in his eyes when he turned away and returned to his seat.

Louise put her eye to the view tube again and examined the approaching

space ship.

"It's a huge sphere," she exclaimed. "I'll bet its two miles in diameter, at least."

"Not a sphere," Ben said from his seat. "It has a spherical front and is facing us head on. It's nearly two miles in diameter and seven miles long."

Alex and Fred stared at him, startled.

"That's just my guess, of course," Ben added hastily, seeing their expression. "While I was looking it turned a little so that I could see part of the side."

"Is that the truth?" Alex asked.

"No," Ben said irritably. He hesitated while the two men looked at him expectantly. Louise had evidently heard nothing of this as she kept watching the ship ahead.

"I said that to cover up the truth," Ben confessed. "The truth is that when I was looking at that ship I seemed to remember all about it, though heaven knows how I could possibly know anything about it at all. I would stake my life on it that I know every square inch of that ship. How could I? That's why I lied. The lie seemed more sensible than to tell the truth."

Louise HAD heard. She turned now, a strange light in her eyes.

"Maybe now you can tell THEM the truth, Alex," she said quietly.

"Maybe I can," Alex said. "Sis and I never saw a flying saucer. We just made up that story. When we first read about them in the paper I just seemed to know what they were and every detail of them. Sis and I played like we were flying all over the universe in them when we were little kids. We thought it was just make believe, but when the first report of one appeared in the papers I felt I just HAD to build one. I would swear this ship is just like those accompanying us, even down

to the last rivet. I just feel it."

"While we're all making confessions," Fred said with an embarrassed laugh, "Maybe I'd better make one. When I was a kid I always insisted that I hadn't been born or brought by a stork. I insisted that I had come in a ship from another star. And all during my college education when I was learning engineering I had a persistent feeling that I was just reviewing rather than learning. Lot's of times I knew things from reading an elementary textbook that only appeared in the more advanced ones. Sometimes it didn't appear there. More than once I could have made a startling major advance in science. But each time some 'voice' whispered, 'NOT YET.'"

"Ha!" Ben exclaimed. "Here we were lying to one another all the time because we thought we were crazy. Whatever the explanation, I'll bet we find it out on that ship when we land. Tell me, Fred, was that story you gave me about losing your job and your girl and striking out on the level?"

"That much was on the level," Fred said. "What I didn't say was that I had a strong feeling long before that something was coming, and when I started hitch hiking I had a strong conviction that where ever it was I was supposed to go, someone would pick me up on the highway and take me there. I didn't know if it was you, though. And I sort of forgot about it until just now."

"What's that word we used to call ourselves when we played make believe?" Louise asked her brother.

"Titans," Alex answered. "When we got older and could read I looked it up in a dictionary. Then when we reached our teens I concluded that someone must have used that word when we were too little to remember, and it appealed to us so we used it without knowing what it meant."

WHILE he was talking he, Louise, and Fred moved as if at a spoken order and took seats, fastening their safety belts. They caught each other doing it, hesitated, then grinned.

"I guess we're just puppets in a marionette show," Louise said shakily.

"That word Titan always appealed to me too," Fred said. "I want to try an experiment. Evidently we haven't much time left before we land."

He took a pencil and a note pad from his pocket and wrote a word on it. Then he handed the pencil and pad to Louise after tearing off the sheet he had used.

"I want each of you to write down your favorite star," he said. "Then we'll see if something else means anything."

Without pausing to think Louise wrote a word and tore off the sheet and handed the pad to Ben. In a moment all four had written the name of their favorite star. They compared.

Fred took the four small sheets and held them together in a row. The word SIRIUS was duplicated on each.

"This is all very strange," Ben said gravely. "For myself, I can honestly say that I have no idea what it's all about. I have a lot of delusions similar to the ones all of you describe, but never took them seriously until now. I CERTAINLY have no recollection of life before I was born. I don't fancy myself to have some strange sounding name, nor any ideas that I had a previous existence as a person or being BY that name. I don't believe in re-incarnation or any of that other occult drivel."

His eyes darted shrewdly to each of the three faces to see what effect his words had on them.

The ship was swaying slightly,—evidently in the grip of forces manipulated

from the huge space ship, taking them down for a landing. None of them seemed at all curious or worried about the landing.

"Did you have a strange feeling about us when you first saw us, Mr. Hess?" Louise asked.

"Hah!" Ben snorted. "I had a strange feeling when I first heard that there were squatters on my airport. Why do you suppose I drove down to investigate? Ordinarily I would have had the sheriff of Hawkins kick you off the property by force. I had the same feeling about Fred here. Crazy as it sounds, I suddenly KNEW about a mile before I saw him ahead on the road that there would be a man walking alone on the highway whom I must stop and pick up. I didn't test it, but I felt that if I didn't I would have engine trouble or a flat or something before I went another hundred yards."

All four jerked from a sudden lurch of the ship. Then everything was still with a stillness of being part of a vast object. They had landed!

"Well," Louise said philosophically, "We'll soon know all about it."

"I wonder if we should have had space suits?" Fred worried. "Maybe if we open the hatch all the air will shoot out."

"Huh uh," Alex said confidently. "I'd bet my last nickel that the hatch opening fits an entrance into the big ship."

HE PROVED to be right. They had trouble getting down to the hatch, due to the fact that "down" was sideways and nearly nonexistent. But they made it.

"Here goes," Alex said weakly as he pulled the handle that unlocked the hatch cover and dropped it outward on its hinges. The set of steps moved with it and came to rest on a rectangular

block that was obviously placed permanently on the deck of the larger ship for just that purpose,—for similar sets of steps to drop on.

Standing at the foot of the steps were several men,—all smiling a welcome as if they knew exactly what they expected to see emerge from the craft they had brought in.

"Welcome to the space ship Coralano," the foremost of them said.

Louise drew close to Fred and slipped her hand in his.

"I'm scared," she whispered.

Ben stepped down into the room below first. Alex looked at Fred and Louise, and followed Ben.

When Fred stepped down with Louise timidly staying close beside him he saw that the men waiting to welcome them were much bigger than they had appeared from above. They were all around seven feet tall and well proportioned, with handsome masculine faces.

On a city street and dressed in ordinary clothes they would have passed as Americans. Here, in their strange garb, it was possible to discern that though they were of some white race they were definitely not of any Earth nationality.

Their shoes were of some cream colored plastic with a double zipper. The soles of the shoes were an inch thick, their tops reaching a third of the way to the knee. Each wore a skirt that came half way down to the knees from the waist. These showed individuality of design and color, though all appeared made from the same kind of cloth. The skirts were held by artistically ornamented belts around the waist.

Above this and stuffed loosely inside the belt were shirts of some silky material in individual colors. The arms of the shirts were more generous than on similar shirts on Earth, and brought

in at the wrist in well fitting cuffs.

Each of them wore an identical helmet of translucent blue plastic. Imbedded in the front of each helmet was a flat band of a golden colored metal, the diameter of the circle being a full three inches and the width of the band about a quarter of an inch. Inside the circle formed by this flat band was an inverted cross, the crossarm forming a segment of a circle that was filled in by a sheet of colorless plastic in which could be seen some sort of intricate circuit.

The lowest point of the entire device just touched the forehead about halfway between the line of the eyebrows and the hairline. The rest of the device was held in a vertical position by the plastic helmet of blue.

THIS much Fred took in at a glance.

There were perhaps twelve men,—all so nearly alike in size and build that they might have come from the same mould.

"We all know your names and all about you," the spokesman was saying. "I am Garl Frolan." He went on to introduce each of the other spacemen.

"I see in your minds," he went on to explain, "that you have pretty well guessed much of the mystery of your being here. We would like you to be our guest for a few hours while we explain everything to you. But first, is there some way you can close and lock your ship while you are away from it?"

Some way so that it can't be opened from within OR without? Not that it isn't perfectly safe, but merely because we have very few restrictions here, and I would rather you locked it than post a guard to keep curious citizens out."

"Of course," Alex said. He lifted the steps and gave them a shove. They receded to the interior of the ship and pulled the hatch cover closed. Alex

took out a key and inserted it in a key-hole and twisted it, locking the door securely.

"No doubt you would like to look over the ship before anything else," Garl Frolan said laughing. "I guess a thing this huge must amaze you."

"It certainly does," Alex admitted, speaking for the rest. "Two miles in diameter and seven miles long?"

"That's right," Garl admitted.

"How do you keep it from being wrecked by asteroids and such?" Fred asked.

"That's the simplest problem of all," Garl replied. "We have devices that detect the approach of even a pin. They calculate the path of the approaching object in a fraction of a second, and if it is going to strike us we shoot a beam of electrons at it. Some of the electrons enter the object and give it a strong negative charge. Then it's repelled from the electron emitter and deflected from its course, passing harmlessly to one side. It's all automatic."

"Beautiful," Fred said. "How about weight? I seem just as heavy right here as I do on Earth!"

"It's an artificial gravity vortex, so distributed that it creates artificial gravitation in the places where it is needed. In other places our shoes come in. They have magnetic plates on the soles and heels that work on a pressure relay so that one can walk normally without conscious effort. The ankle muscles have to keep the body vertical in those places, but you get used to it after a time."

While this conversation was going on they were all stepping onto a traveling runway on the other side of a doorway. This led in an upward curve. When they stepped off Garl Frolan spoke again.

"We're now just inside the longitu-

dinal shell. The ship rotates on its longitudinal axis just fast enough so that here weight is normal, produced from centrifugal force of rotation."

The conducted tour lasted for two hours. It took them into vast auditoriums, even vaster libraries, where they were surprised to find a section of over a million books from the Earth itself, with many more millions from other worlds. They visited hydroponic gardens, chemical plants, silently powerful atom power plants, repair shops, and so many different places that when the tour ended in a luxurious apartment they accepted the comfortably upholstered seats with spinning heads.

CHAPTER IV

EVERYWHERE they had seen people working. People that looked like veritable gods. And nowhere had anyone of them exhibited curiosity over the four Earthlings. More than once some worker had spoken to them, calling each of them by name as if he had known them for years.

Toward the last they had been taken to a super-automat where the menu was pasted beside a row of buttons. They merely pressed the button next to what they wanted and in less than a minute it was served.

Now they waited for Garl Frolan to begin talking. They wanted to learn the explanation of all this. From the collection of Earth books and the obvious familiarity of all these people with the details of Earth, they had not just recently come into the solar system. That much was certain.

"Now that you've given us the once over," Garl began, "What I am going to say will seem more credible. First of all I should tell you who we are, really. We are part of a vast civilization that extends over the whole Milky Way.

"How old is it? Our known history goes back twenty trillion years of Earth time. Even then we were a vast, interstellar group. No one knows where we originated. It may have been in some other galaxy,—a spiral nebula that is thousands of light years away from this one.

"Seventy-nine thousand years ago we landed on the Earth and created the human race, producing mutations on the naturally evolved creatures present there which brought forth creatures very similar to the modern man.

"Except for regular patrol landings, we left the human race alone, to develop as they would. Now the times have come to try to elevate the human race into full adulthood. On some planets it comes about without our assistance. On the Earth there has been too much superstition and not enough clear thinking. Today the planet is headed for a war which will plunge it back into the dark ages, and if we don't intervene it may be another two or three thousand years before the human race is ready again for a try at adulthood.

"BUT, and here's the reason why we haven't made a demonstration of power and peremptorily ordered humanity to behave; we must conform to interstellar Law, set down by treaty and age old custom. That law expressly forbids physical interference. We couldn't land a ship and hand over its secrets. We couldn't even land and disclose the existence of our Titan civilization. What we can legally do we ARE doing, however.

"I won't go into the ramifications of it all. The part that immediately concerns you four is all that you need to know. You have probably guessed that since birth you have been the recipients of special attention and guidance.

"From now on, though, you will be

more than inspired. You will be in direct contact with intelligent forces which will aid you in the work you must do, and protect you from the forces that would destroy you before you get back to the surface if they could."

"What's the nature of these forces you speak of?" Ben asked quickly.

"I was just coming to that," Garl Frolan said with a smile. "All of you humans, and all of us, are really each two creatures with one mind. One is the animal and the other is a microscopic entity that is indestructable. This microscopic entity is believed by us to be some sort of highly complex molecule, though no direct proof has ever been discovered to prove this.

"YOU, the thinking, self aware mind, reside in this microscopic entity, contacting the brain function during waking, and dropping that contact during sleep. The details of this interrelationship of the two bodies is a complex and very advanced field of science all by itself, and would take you many years of study to master to any extent.

"When you die only the animal body dies. The microscopic entity soon finds itself cut loose from the means of expression it once had. After a time it learns to use new faculties. The change might be likened to the difference between a worm which uses stomach muscles to crawl along, and the butterfly that uses wings to fly through the air.

"Now one of these discarnate entities alone can do little more than a dust mote in the air. When it learns its full physical abilities it can join in with millions of others like it, and through teamwork become part of an intelligent force that is quite powerful.

"For example, five thousand well trained discarnate individuals working together can meet and stop a bullet

speeding through the air toward the heart of one of you. Ten million of them can set up an invisible wall about one of you, through which nothing can penetrate.

"Several million of them can enter a partially decomposed human body and restore all its parts to perfect working order, bringing the person back to life.

"And just one of them can contact you directly and teach you many things without benefit of other learning.

"Also, though it is strictly forbidden except in the greatest emergency and then only until the emergency is past, one of them can take over complete control of your body so that you yourself are just an idle observer of your own physical actions."

"Then religion is true?" Louise asked. "It's really true that we have a soul and that there's a God and a heaven and a hell where we go when we die?"

"You have a soul," Garl said. "But the rest is slightly distorted. The Supreme Being which is the basic idea of God is nothing more than the cosmos itself. It's considered Divine by some schools of thought, though actually it is just basic reality. By analogy you can give it the attributes you yourself possess, such as intelligence, oneness, etc.; and you can build up a metaphysical edifice of thought in which you consider all beings as progressing toward at-oneness with the cosmos considered as the Supreme Being. Actually this boils down to the inescapable fact that you are part of the cosmos and as you learn to understand and control and manipulate the unintelligent forces that make up this cosmos you are approaching perfection.

"When the human race learned the phenomena that produce radio and built networks of broadcasting stations

with millions of receiving sets in all the homes everywhere, they were approaching one step nearer to at-oneness with the Supreme Being,—the cosmos itself. When they are initiated into all the secrets of science and living as we have them in the Titan Republics they will be able to use all the forces of the cosmos, creating life, new planets, molding racial stock to create intelligent races, and all the other things that are supposed to be the sole province of the Creator Himself.

"It will take time for you to assimilate that, but from now on you will always have direct contact with teachers who will help you."

Garl stood up.

"If you will pardon me for a moment," he excused himself.

WHILE he was gone the four Earthlings could do nothing but look at one another wonderingly. Garl was gone only a minute. He came back carrying a box that looked very much like a small portable radio set.

He addressed his remarks to Fred now.

"Fred," he said. "I'm going to give you this gadget to take back to Earth with you. I want you to study it and get patents on it, and put one in every home on Earth. It's electronic in nature, though quite a radical departure from orthodox circuits. It makes communication with the dead possible.

"I'd better warn you that there are forces on the Earth that would blast you and every set you make if they suspected what you are to do. Therefore, you will incorporate the circuit of this set with that of a conventional radio and sell it as an ordinary radio in a company you will form with the financial support of Mr. Hess here. After you have sold several hundred thousand of them you will announce

publicly the true nature of the thing, and how to work it. Then there will be people all over the country who can twist a knob and talk with the dead around them just as easily as you can talk over a phone today.

"I can't stress too strongly the importance of doing this properly. If we can prove to the world that *being a spirit is no more miraculous than being alive*, and that the spirits of the departed on Earth can actually take part in the activities of life, and vice versa, then our major objective is accomplished. Superstition and belief in miracles, hells, heavens, and all other things that form an iron curtain between the living and the dead will be at an end. Study of spirit life will become just as much a part of science as any other department of science."

He flicked a toggle switch on the plastic box and sat back in his chair.

Almost at once a voice spoke in the set.

"This is Hando," the voice said. "You will have plenty of time to get better acquainted with me because I'm going to be talking to you through this communicator for the rest of your life, Fred. I've been with you since you were born.

"Do you remember the day you were trying to decide whether to study to be an electronics engineer or a chemical engineer? You liked both fields equally well and couldn't make up your mind."

"I remember," Fred said. "What did I do?"

"You went to a fortune teller," Hando said. "She told you to choose Chemical Engineering, so you promptly chose the other!"

"Right," Fred said, grinning.

"See how simple it is?" Garl broke in. "Actually, the main reason for getting all of you up here was to give you

this set. You, Alex, will go ahead with your space ship. With Ben's assistance you will put it over, and before long the human race will be ready to see what the solar system looks like in detail."

"I suppose all I'm to do is make money and eat," Ben spoke up, a humorous smile twisting his lips.

"You know better than that," Garl answered his smile. "Right now without any assistance from us you can just about control the major programs of the United States. Before long you will be the power behind the government and eventually the power behind the United Nations."

"And me?" Louise asked timidly.

"Now, I'm glad you asked that question," Garl said seriously, a twinkle in his eye. "Yes indeed. That was a very good question." He laughed jovially. Louise pouted prettily as the others joined in the laughter.

IT WAS nearly twenty-four hours later before Alex and his sister Louise with Fred and Ben said good-bye to Garl Frolan and his fellow Titans. They said their good-byes regretfully. There were so many mysteries they had not learned the answers to.

Garl had mentioned the name of another civilization which he called the Atlans. These were a friendly people of huge size, but they didn't take any part in the expansion of civilization throughout the galaxy, being content to live within themselves without expanding or including new races and worlds in their group. The Atlans were much older as a civilization than the Titans. First known contact of the Titans with the Atlans in their explorations had been several hundred billions of years before. The Atlans had accepted them in a friendly spirit

and had cleared up many of the points of the dim beginnings of their own history as if they knew all about it from direct observation. The two civilizations mingled freely in a purely cultural way, neither needing anything from the other materially.

He had also mentioned a giant galactic empire of spirits of the dead that had broken away from the systems of planets and suns altogether, living in the interstellar spaces, and looking on the cosmos as an intelligent, all powerful entity which they considered the Supreme Being.

"Their way is fallacious," Garl had said gravely. "Considering the cosmos as a Being, they make the mistake of believing that some spirits of the dead can 'hear' the voice of this Being as it 'tells' them what to do. It makes for a fallacious Absolute Authority upon which to rest the final say on what must be done, or what is right. In all worlds where this Ethereal civilization holds domination of a planet there springs up leader after leader who asserts that he, too, can hear the voice of the Creator. His followers, believing, back him whether he is right or wrong. They're taught that it is a sin against God to use their own reason or to question the 'voice of Authority' as interpreted by their God."

This had struck a sensible note. The four Earthlings had an average acquaintance with the existence of dozens of religions on Earth and thousands of cults. They knew as did everyone on Earth of the assertion of every victor in a war that God had been on their side or they wouldn't have won.

When Alex brought the ship into the airport at St. Louis the little group of four were prepared to assume the responsibilities that would be theirs for the coming years and do what they were to do to the best of their ability.

They had only an inkling of the size and scope of the operations they were to take part in. They had no slightest suspicion of the Mongolian stowaway hidden on the ship nor whom he represented. Nor did any of the guards Ben hastily summoned to keep watch on the plane see him as he slipped out during the night and made his way on foot to a highway where he caught a bus into the city.

At Hawkins, Oklahoma, the Mongolian had to lurk in hiding because he would have stood out among the natives like a neon sign. In St. Louis he walked boldly into a hotel and rented a room for the night, secure in the fact that there were hundreds of Orientals there of all descriptions.

THE car was parked in the shadows a half a block down the street from the night club. A cigaret flared feebly as the man slouched behind the wheel sucked smoke into his lungs. The light disclosed four figures, their high cheekbones accentuated by the feeble glow.

The driver was the Mongolian who had hidden in the ship on its trip out to the space ship Coralano. The other three had arrived at the airport that very afternoon on a DC4 from Los Angeles.

The one sitting beside the driver rubbed the dull finished submachine-gun on his lap affectionately.

From time to time a uniformed boy would come out of the brightly lighted entrance to the night club and go out to the parking lot in the rear, returning with a car.

He would park it at the entrance and people would come out and drive away in it.

The Mongolians in the darkened car would stare intently at the people who came out and drove away, then settle back patiently.

Behind the night club and in the distance lights reflected from the dark surface of the Mississippi, accentuating its dull listlessness and lazy stride toward the sea.

The muted sound of the orchestra in the club came with directionless softness to blend with the night scene. Only the occasional whirr of a starting motor in the parking lot or a lonely wail of a distant river boat whistle brought a discordant, contrasting note into the night air.

Louise drifted dreamily across the dance floor, her soft hair nestled on Fred's shoulder. She was humming the orchestra refrain so that it carried no farther than his ear.

Fred was dancing absently, his mind on the plans for leasing a huge warehouse building in St. Louis which he and Ben had looked at that afternoon.

The music stopped. Fred took a couple of steps before it dawned on him that there was no more music.

"I could dance forever too," Louise said, fortunately misinterpreting his absentmindedness.

They strolled back to their table. Fred glanced at his wristwatch. It was after midnight.

"I suppose we have to go," Louise pouted.

"We should," Fred admitted regretfully. "And since we have a big job to do I think we'd better."

He signalled for the waiter and paid his check while Louise wound through the tables toward the stairway whose three graceful steps led to street level.

As he paid the bill and presented the claim check for their wraps the orchestra started up again in the room they had just left.

He slipped Louise's coat over her and squeezed her shoulders affectionately. She turned her head and looked up wrinkling her nose at him.

"Your car is ready, sir."

Fred slipped the young man a quarter and slid his hand possessively under Louise's arm.

The car was new;—a sedan with only fifty miles on it so far. But then he had had it only a day and a half.

He helped Louise in and walked around the back of the car to the driver's side.

"Home James," Louise said imperiously as he slid under the wheel.

"Yes, mum," Fred answered with the stiff formality of a good chauffeur. He slipped the car into gear and let it start smoothly. Then they looked at each other mischievously and laughed.

Louise moved over, and Fred's arm cradled her next to him while the car gathered speed.

The paved road wound parallel to the bank of the Mississippi, and the headlights sent shafts of light into the blackness ahead.

Fred squinted his eyes as the lights of a car creeping up in back reflected from the rear view mirror and partially blinded him.

Ahead, the lights of St. Louis lit up the sky. On either side of the road black shadows sped by, to be caught in the lights of the car behind and exposed as wild bushes and unkept meadow grass.

The car behind drew over to the left in preparation for passing. It drew up beside him slowly, its occupants evidently in no hurry to get around him.

Suddenly it swerved closer. With a muttered exclamation Fred turned the wheel sharply to avoid a collision. The right wheel hit the dirt, then found the edge of a ditch and dragged the car with it.

There was a violent lurch as the car tipped half over and came to rest in the bottom of the ditch. It slid on its side before coming to rest.

Anxiously Fred asked Louise if she was all right.

"I will be if you get off of me, you big lug," she said.

Carefully Fred set his feet on the right door which now served as the floor of the car and stood up, pushing the left hand door upward.

THE car responsible for the accident had stopped and was backing up slowly.

Louise rose beside him. Fred held the door open with one hand.

"Put your foot in my hand," he said. "Then you can boost yourself out."

The car on the road had stopped and two men climbed out of the back seat and came toward them.

Louise climbed out and stood on the side of the car. The two men came closer.

"Let me give you a hand," one of them said. His voice was friendly as he held up his hand. It was too dark to see any detail of his clothing or features.

Louise accepted the hand and leaped lightly to the road.

The friendly clasp of the hand changed abruptly to a vice like grip. Louise felt herself jerked toward the waiting car. She turned her head toward Fred and screamed. Her eyes unbelievably saw the other stranger slam the door down on Fred and jump away.

She dug her heels into the pavement and tried to pull back. The two men pushed her into the back seat of the car and slammed the door, holding her between them.

The driver started with a clash of gears.

Fred had been completely unprepared for the sudden shift from friendly help to vicious attack. He had been half out of the car, and had fallen back

off balance when he was shoved.

In the dark he fumbled frenziedly for the door handle again. When he finally got the door open and leaped out the tail lights of the other car were just winking out around a bend several blocks away, toward St. Louis.

He began cursing bitterly and with monotonous desperation as he ran down the road in the direction the car had gone.

Behind him headlights of another car approached. He stepped to the middle of the highway and waved his arms frantically. The car slowed down. Its driver saw the overturned car in the ditch and came to a stop.

Fred ran around to the door and opened it, climbing in.

"Get going," he said earnestly. "The car ahead. It deliberately wrecked me and kidnapped Louise. Catch up with it before we lose it. I couldn't get the number or even see what they looked like."

The driver was quick witted. He grasped what Fred was saying at once and had the speedometer needle past sixty before he stopped talking. It crept up to eighty, then ninety.

Tail lights blinked into sight ahead.

"That must be it," the driver murmured sympathetically. "Let's hope so."

"It's GOT to be," Fred ground out. "It IS. I recognize that slightly bluish tint to the right tail-light."

The tail-lights ahead began to recede.

"Faster!" Fred groaned. "Faster."

"Don't worry," the driver said soothingly. "It's only another mile to the city and then they'll have to go slow. They won't get away."

His confidence in himself proved to be well founded. The car ahead wove in and out of the light traffic, but the man behind the wheel in pursuit slowly

shortened the distance between the two cars.

The wail of a police siren began to creep up-in back.

Now the car ahead was only a half a block in the lead. It slowed suddenly and made a screeching left hand turn. Fred's driver overshot the corner, backed up with a heartbreaking delay, and shot forward again. The other car was three blocks ahead again.

The police car made the corner and crept up closer. Its siren was now a deafening wail that cleared all other traffic out of the way.

Fred's driver took advantage of this and soon shortened the distance to half a block once more.

The car ahead veered onto a wide arterial that led toward the airport west of St. Louis with both of the pursuing cars behind it.

The airport dropped behind. On the open highway all three cars were doing nearly a hundred miles an hour.

The police car edged over and crept up beside them. Fred's driver pointed to the car ahead and motioned the police to go ahead.

They got the idea and went in the lead. As they passed the policeman beside the driver of the police car drew out his service pistol. The driver shook his head.

AT A hundred miles an hour it would be fatal to shoot a tire.

Again the car that carried Louise braked without warning. The police car and Fred shot past it as it turned off the highway onto a side road.

As they turned around they saw a plane lit up by the headlights of the fleeing car.

Fred desperately engraved every detail of the plane into his memory. With a sinking feeling he knew that they would not be able to reach the plane

before it took off.

Seconds later he joined the police as they watched the plane disappear into the night sky.

Briefly Fred explained what had happened. An examination of the escape car gave no clue that would be of help in tracing the men who had kidnapped Louise.

"Look," Fred exclaimed. "A friend of mine,—Louise's brother, owns a plane that will be able to find that plane before it gets very far. His airport is only a few miles from here. Take me there. Radio your headquarters to call him by phone and tell him to get his plane warmed up. That way it'll be ready to take off when we get there."

"I'll stay here and guard things until more police get here," Fred's driver volunteered.

"Thanks," Fred said earnestly. "I appreciate what you've done."

He shouted his name and phone number over his back as he climbed in beside the police.

Alex had just gotten the phone call from the police a moment before Fred came running into the hangar. The huge doors were being opened by a mechanic. Another mechanic had hooked a baby truck to the plane in preparation for dragging it onto the field.

Fred ran up the steps into the ship, pulling them up and closing the hatch cover before ascending to the pilot compartment.

Alex looked up anxiously as Fred came in.

"I know what the plane looks like. That's all," Fred said. "But it should be easy to find if we use our heads. We how far that plane could go in the can circle at a distance that is about time since it took off. We'll have to

bank on the possibility that with them flying without lights when they took off, and perhaps changing direction after they were up high, they will now be going in a straight line."

"You'll know the plane for sure when you see it?" Alex asked quietly, his emotions well under control.

"Yes," Fred answered. "I knew we couldn't stop it, so I memorized every detail of the ship;—even a distinctive patch or two on the left side."

The ship moved out of the hangar. Through the view tubes Alex watched the baby truck unhook and get out of the way. The field was deserted.

With his lips a grim line, and a light of cold vengeful fire in his blue eyes, he pressed down on both the stern and belly thrust potential throttles.

Fred felt himself pulled with terrific force into the back of his seat. There was a dull throb in his head.

To the men on the ground it was an unbelievable sight. One moment a strange looking ship rested on the concrete runway. It lifted a few feet, hovering while its landing gear went into the ship. Then—it seemed to vanish. The sound that came to their ears was confusing. For a second it was a whooshing roar around them. Then it was an indescribably eerie whistle that seemed to come from a great distance.

After that the smell of ozone tickled their nostrils.

"SEE anything yet?" Alex asked tautly.

"No," Fred muttered. "Wait a minute! There's a plane off to the right a thousand feet down."

Alex's fingers were white knuckled as he maneuvered the ship closer. Both men stared at the enlarging ship below.

"An airliner," Fred groaned.

It flashed by underneath in seconds

as Alex sent the ship upward again. The spiral path they were following took them farther and farther from St Louis.

"There's a ship flying without lights," Alex suddenly exclaimed. "That MUST be it."

He dropped the ship down, decelerating rapidly. Fred glued his eye to the view tube that brought the shadowy ship flying below into view.

"That's it all right," he said grimly. "Now what'll we do. If we shoot it down we may kill Louise."

"We'll have to follow it," Alex said. "If it tries to land on a private airfield we can get under it and keep it from landing."

"They see us," Alex chuckled humorlessly as the dark ship dived to one side in an effort to escape in the darkness. "Hang on, Fred. Here we go after them."

The next fifteen minutes saw flying that would have made history if it had been recorded on film. The huge saucerlike ship could accelerate a full four gravities in any direction without banking. Beside it the ordinary plane they were following was a slow, clumsy beetle, lumbering lazily along.

At the end of fifteen minutes the pilot of the other craft evidently decided he wouldn't be shot down. His only escape would be to get to his destination and hope to land and escape before the larger ship could stop him.

He straightened out and headed directly west, ignoring Alex and Fred, who followed a thousand yards behind and five hundred feet higher.

The chase continued over Oklahoma, New Mexico, the panhandle of Texas, and on toward southern California.

"How long can he go without running out of gas?" Alex muttered as California swept by underneath. The

sun had come up over the horizon behind, exposing every detail of the kidnappers' ship.

Los Angeles appeared in the distance. Both ships were flying high. The other ship veered south and Alex followed. There were no airports here. The ship obviously planned on heading out to sea.

Unless its objective were a ship it would run out of gas and plunge into the ocean.

As both planes reached the coast and started out into the Pacific, both Alex and Fred peered ahead anxiously. There were fifteen or twenty boats dotting the ocean.

Would the occupants of the fleeing ship bail out and be picked up in small boats? Was their destination a ship with a landing deck, so that they would not have to scuttle the plane to escape? If it were, that ship would undoubtedly have anti-aircraft guns which would drive Alex and Fred away or shoot them down.

THE fleeing ship kept on. Soon the coast and the many fishing boats dropped behind the eastern horizon.

"How long can they keep on?" Alex groaned. "They couldn't possibly carry enough gasoline to get even this far without refueling!"

"There must be a ship or an island before long," Fred said. "We can be sure now that the next thing that comes above the horizon is their destination."

"What'll we do, Fred?" Alex asked desperately. "If we keep them from landing they'll crash in the sea as soon as their gasoline runs out. If we let them land at their destination they'll be so heavily protected that we couldn't rescue Louise. Unless the St. Louis police spread the alarm and we are followed we can't hope for any assistance. The unfortunate thing about

the drive principle of this ship is that it prohibits radio."

"I've been thinking those same questions," Fred said. "I've also been wondering why Louise would be kidnapped. Surely, when a car is wrecked to kidnap a woman, and the chase winds up with a trip out into the Pacific, it would be too absurd to think it is a sex kidnapping or kidnapping for ransom by a small band of crooks."

"Who, then?" Alex asked, his eyes wide with the new implications.

"Minions of the Ethereans!" Fred exclaimed. Then a look of doubt crept into his eyes. "But why would they have to do this. What would be their game?"

"Their game is obviously to lure us into a trap to capture this ship," Alex answered.

"But they didn't lure us into any trap," Fred objected. "They made sure I wouldn't be able to follow them in the first place. Until they found they couldn't escape us, and became sure we wouldn't shoot them down because we were afraid of hurting Louise, they made every effort to get away without leaving a trace."

"Well, look," Fred continued after several minutes of silence. "Why don't we knock out one of their motors? They'll be able to keep in the air for a time, but they'll have to land the first place they can,—some island or something."

"No!" Alex turned down the suggestion. "Machine-gunning a motor would be likely to set the plane on fire."

"If it did they'd have to parachute into the sea and we could pick them up," Fred objected.

"How?" Alex asked. "The only opening is in the belly of the ship. It would be under water. We couldn't take off again either."

The hours began to stretch out into

eternities. The ship ahead and below drove forward with unchanging pace. Alex had finally given in to exhaustion and slept, letting Fred take over.

He was snoring softly when the Hawaiian Islands looked up over the southern horizon for a short time. Fred dozed off once and awoke with a start to find the other ship nearly out of sight.

He quickly woke Alex, then sank into a sleep of utter exhaustion himself.

The sun had out-distanced both ships and sunk out of sight in the west when he woke up again, completely refreshed.

The other ship had turned on its riding lights as soon as it got dark;—evidently welcoming the constant attendance of the pursuing ship in the vast no-man's land of the western Pacific. Or was the whole thing just a scheme to lure Alex and Fred to some powerful fortress where the new ship could be captured?

Whatever lay behind it, one thing was now certain; the conventional looking ship that carried Louise as an unwilling passenger did not use ordinary motors fueled by gasoline. If it did, however efficient they might be, the ship would have used up all the gasoline it could possibly carry long ago.

An atom power plant? Hardly possible,—unless the Ethereans had built it themselves, assuming that they were behind the kidnapping. Yet, if the physical body of a spirit of the dead were actually atomic or molecular, and the intelligence that functioned in it could manipulate its suburban electrical charges at will, it might be possible for several million of them as an intelligent force to run even an ordinary airplane motor indefinitely without the aid of gasoline!

The ship Alex had built, with its entirely different drive principle, almost defied the law of conservation of energy. In supersonic flight it sent out a pale, nearly invisible wedge of force that split the atmosphere ahead of the ship so that the blunt forward face of the band that circled the ship encountered almost a perfect vacuum. There was no retarding thrust to this action because the forces that did the shearing worked against each other rather than against the ship itself.

In subsonic flight, as now, very little expenditure of energy was necessary. The ship rode in a near vacuum all around, the atmosphere held away by the drive force, force balanced against force rather than against the skin of the ship as in ordinary aircraft.

The power consumed by the huge ship would have barely kept a single seater aloft with the ordinary gasoline motor and a propeller.

If the ship they were following DID have a source of infinite power to draw on, and planned to keep going until Fred and Alex were forced down with exhausted fuel tanks, they would have to circle the globe many, many times.

A YELLOW half moon hung in the western sky, beckoning them on. It had been overhead, a pale ghostly thing, when the sun dropped into the sea. In a few hours it, too would go down.

"I'm hungry," Alex said suddenly. "I think there's some canned goods still stored below with the other stuff I hadn't unloaded yet."

Fred went exploring, returning in a few minutes with several cans of tomatoes.

"These ought to satisfy us," he said. "I like them cold. Do you, Alex?"

"I sure do," Alex replied with a suppressed smile. "I love 'em."

Fred found a can opener and opened two of them. The two men drank the juice from the can and let the large chunks of tomatoes slide into their mouths.

"Wonder how they're treating Louise?" Alex asked quietly.

"Don't talk about it," Fred said harshly. "If I think about it I'll go mad."

"Sorry," Alex said. "I don't think they plan on hurting her though. Their game is too big for things like that. I'll bet she got a better meal than we just had."

The Sun had dipped below an unbroken line of ocean. When the moon touched the horizon it had the unevenness of a continent. Asia!

The plane ahead did not pause. It headed inland as if with definite purpose at an altitude of twelve thousand feet. The stars in the cloudless sky watched the pursuit with cold, beady aloofness. The land below was a dark mysterious blanket.

"They must be heading for Tibet," Alex commented.

"Tibet!" Fred said, startled. "Say! Those Mongolians that were killed near Hawkins. Do you suppose they were trying to do what those fellows ahead have done? I didn't get a chance to see what nationality those men that took Louise were. The one that spoke didn't have a foreign accent. But it's possible they were Mongolians."

"We didn't get much chance to learn about the Ethereans on the Coralano," Alex said thoughtfully. "Garl Frolan was more interested in getting us to know what we were supposed to do. It may be that the Ethereans have a headquarters in Tibet. From all I've heard of it it's the spiritual headquarters of the whole world."

"Well," Fred said. "It's quite clear what this is all about now. The Ether-

eans don't want space travel because then everybody will know that there's a huge interstellar civilization. The Earth will join it and then the Ether-eans will lose a whole world. Obviously we were supposed to follow these men when they captured Louise. They made it hard so that we wouldn't suspect. I'll bet that fellow that picked me up was in with them,—came along to make sure I followed them to that airport. Picked me up and took me. I'll bet if we had missed the airplane in the dark when we found it it would have stuck around until we DID locate it."

"And if we don't get back to St. Louis the world will go on experimenting with rockets and never get a successful space ship," Alex said bitterly.

FRED looked at Alex with a cynical smile.

"Strange how vulnerable we humans are," he said with a short laugh. "With the future of humanity at stake we risk everything to rescue one person whom we both love. We couldn't turn around and go back and forget Louise and do what the Titans expect us to do, even if we were certain that going ahead meant death."

"That's ri— Hey! What's that?" Alex exclaimed.

He had glanced through the view tube to check on the other plane. Fred looked.

A new plane was diving on the one ahead. Tracer fire revealed that it was firing on it. The attacker was an American fighter plane with a Chinese nationalist insignia.

The kidnappers' plane had been caught unawares. At the last moment it side slipped out of the line of fire. Then the Chinese plane swept past, climbing upward in a steep turn to come back.

Alex and Fred watched anxiously, not even thinking of their own danger. If that plane were shot down Louise might be hurt or killed. That's all they could think about.

The fighter plane came in again, slower and more wary. The commercial type plane of the kidnappers was slower, more clumsy, than the fighter. It waited, ready to maneuver out of the line of fire once more.

In the dim starlight rapid motion tricked the eyes. It was hard to follow what was happening.

The fighter pilot was skillful. When the other plane sideslipped he swerved, his tracers coming closer and closer.

Suddenly the kidnappers' plane lurched. It was out of control! A dark object dropped from it. The white circle of a parachute burst into bloom before it had gone far. Another, then three more followed it.

The fighter pilot circled lazily as the five parachutes sank slowly, keeping close together as they dropped. He ignored the ship above. Alex dropped down and tried to approach the parachutes without actually touching any of them. One of them must be Louise!

All five figures were covered with thick warm coveralls, fur lined and padded generously for stratosphere flight. It was impossible to tell which might be Louise.

A searchlight on the ground sprang into life and fixed on the parachuting figures after a few exploratory swoops through the sky. It held on them as they approached the ground.

When they landed the searchlight dipped down to bathe the earth in bright light. One by one the five figures touched the ground, the billowing chutes collapsing and being covered by dozens of Chinese soldiers who quickly overcame the parachutists.

"Land, Alex," Fred ordered. "I'll

drop out and close the hatch after me. If these troops are friendly O.K. If not, since they are nationalist troops we'll be safe. You can take off and get to the nearest American representative and force our release."

"I wonder why that fighter pilot didn't try for us?" Alex asked. "Why doesn't he try now?"

"Damfino," Fred answered hastily, walking toward the steps that led below. "We can do our figuring after we get Louise safely on board."

THE floor beneath his feet jumped slightly as the wheels settled to the ground. He waited for no more. Opening the hatch cover he shoved the set of steps through and ran down them almost before they had touched earth.

The huge searchlight illuminated the scene brightly. Chinese soldiers formed a ring at a safe distance. He waved reassurances at them and ran toward the direction where he knew the parachutists had landed.

Now that the long chase was over and Louise was safe Fred shook as with the ague as he pushed through the grinning soldiers. They moved aside reluctantly, it seemed to him.

He was through the thickest of them. Five figures a short distance away were in the process of shedding heavy coveralls. Something was wrong.

Fred brought up short. The five were all men, round of face with high cheekbones and slanting eyes. They had paused in their undressing to look at him.

Louise was not among them!

Fred turned toward the ship. Alex was being dragged down the steps to the ground by several soldiers.

Other soldiers were slowly approaching him, guns ready. The mask was off now. He and Alex had fallen into an elaborate trap laid in St. Louis and

sprung somewhere deep in Asia.

And since no one could possibly have parachuted from the plane they had followed after they picked it up near St. Louis it meant that Louise was still in the United States somewhere. Or did it?

Fred suddenly recalled the plane. Since this had been a trap it meant that the plane had not been really hit. He and Alex had ASSUMED it was hit, and had forgotten about it as they closely followed the parachutists to Earth. They had thought Louise must be one of those figures. Maybe she was still on the plane as it flew to some nearby landing field.

Now everything was lost. The plane was in the hands of minions of the Ethereans, and so were he and Alex. Alex alone possessed the knowledge necessary to build another if it were destroyed. And he himself was the only one who could build the special circuit into a common radio to establish direct and positive two-way communication with spirits of the dead,—a prerequisite to the modern scientific civilization's accepting survival after death.

He clenched his fists in helpless desperation as the soldiers surrounded him with their bayoneted rifles, but it was useless to fight.

CHAPTER V

BEN HESS grabbed the newspaper off the breakfast tray as it came through the door and dropped wearily into the heavy chair by the window overlooking downtown St. Louis. He knew beforehand that if there were any news concerning the disappearance of Louise, or the whereabouts of Alex and Fred in their ship, he would be notified long before it appeared in the papers; yet his mind was hyperactive with worry and he had to channel its

feverishness into a normal outlet to keep from going mad.

The waiter arranged the food on a small table and moved it near Ben, then retired quietly.

The headlines were MYSTERY SHIP CHASES KIDNAPPERS. Under it were two columns filled mostly with speculation about the ship. It had been seen over Chicago, New York, Washington, D. C., Los Angeles, and practically every place in the United States. It had been seen heading out to sea in Florida two hours before it had left the airport at St. Louis!

Satisfied that there was nothing positive to glean from this part of the news, Ben sampled his breakfast absently and turned his eyes to other headlines.

The World Council of Christian Churches had drawn up and passed on a charter. There was a full column continued on the inside pages on the details of this move of the churches. The gist of it was that they would present an active united front against world communism and urge active pressure by their lay members to force governments to outlaw it and drive it from the face of the Earth.

The communist government of Italy was expected at any moment to repudiate the sovereignty of territory of the Vatican. It was expected that the Italian communist government would expel the Pope from Italy, in which case he would come to the United States and set up a new headquarters for Catholicism.

In Palestine the Jewish outlaw army had captured part of the Arab territory and driven out all Arabs. There were rumors of a secret weapon they had used, and were still using to hold off the growing army of Arabs collecting around their borders.

A special session of the Security Council of the United Nations was deadlocked with Russia blocking all attempts to form a line of action, while the United States was insisting that an international army take over Palestine.

The debate in both houses over the admission of Japan to the Union was waging hot. The vote in Japan had been unanimous, and the Japanese assembly had sent its demand to become a part of the United States of America to the U. S. government.

The strongest argument against accepting the demand was that if the Japanese thus became U. S. citizens millions of them would at once come over and create a big labor problem. To prevent indiscriminate immigration of Japanese would be to discriminate against one section of the "United States" if they were admitted to the Union as either a state or a territory.

One of the senators had suggested a possible solution by introducing a rider that would restrict emigration from all states of the Union. This would not work a hardship on any of the present states because the quotas would be well above the normal migration of people within the U. S. proper.

On the editorial page was a long discourse on the subject. The idea of joining the United States as a state, with state's rights to self government coupled with the advantages of a national government was growing to serious proportions.

Even the Jewish government of Palestine was seriously discussing it!

Another phase of that idea was the growing move in South America to form a continental government with all the South American nations becoming states in it similar to the U. S. The fly in the ointment seemed to be that those countries most in favor of it were communist dominated.

Long wave frequency-modulation television experiments were bringing success, and it was predicted that before long STATIONS WOULD BROADCAST BOTH SOUND AND IMAGE AT THE SAME TIME AND ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH. And on normal broadcast frequencies.

Ben read this over twice very carefully. The news article said that a new type of circuit changed the frequency modulated broadcast wave to a current in the circuit, and that special selectors separated the image broadcast from the speech broadcast in the wave, channelling each to its own outlet without distortion.

HIS breakfast was getting cold. He laid the paper aside and concentrated on it half-heartedly, wolfing eggs and toast with a faraway look in his eyes.

The surprise he had felt at learning that the Titans had allowed Louise to be kidnapped returned. He knew that the spirits of the dead of the Titan Civilization were on Earth in great numbers, and that many of them were assigned the task of protecting their human agents and instruments from harm.

There was a growing suspicion in his mind that they had PERMITTED the kidnapping of Louise for some reason not apparent on the surface.

His thoughts turned to the Mongolians in those two cars. They had been killed by someone in a plane. Why? Who did they represent? Who had been behind their killing? Obviously, since their destination had been the new ship Alex was building, they were connected with some huge organization. Assuming it was the Etherean group, then who were the ones that murdered them? If there were a third great power joined in this struggle for

possession of the Earth, then those Mongolians that had been killed could belong to them instead of the Ethereans. It was very confusing.

Ben let his thoughts wander in this channel. It all seemed very confusing and interwoven with custom or agreement on conduct.

Here there was a gigantic Titan ship circling the Earth, with other smaller ships exactly like the one Alex had built coming down into the atmosphere; yet the logical move,—to land and contact Earth governments and prove to them directly that there was a huge extraterrestrial group of humans who had space travel and all the wonders of superscience, was prohibited by some unexplained "custom."

And here also were the billions of spirits of the dead of ages past and of other planets and systems, who lived in interstellar space and wanted all the people of Earth to join them after death, rather than have the Earth become a mechanical and scientific unit of interstellar humanity. Yet they too refrained from coming out into the open as they could very easily do any time they chose.

There seemed to be something else,—some third side in the "fight," and maybe a fourth and fifth. The whole thing seemed to be going on with a lot of rules that prohibited any direct and logical move. Unquestionably the consolidation of all Christian churches against communism was a move "inspired" by the Ethereans. But what of communism? The Titans didn't claim it for their own! Could the Ethereans also be behind that? Or was there a third party in control of communism?

What would be the final outcome of everything? The reason all sides seemed to be obeying rigid restrictions in the fight seemed to be that if either side won by violating the rules of con-

duct of their "war," the other side would at once destroy the Earth and all its people!

Or maybe there was some super referee that would award the planet to the losing side in case of a "foul!"

Ben shook his head in despair at ever being able to figure out all the ramifications of what he now knew and suspected.

A new angle occurred to him. Would there be another world war? It seemed that the Ethereans or the Titans could not come down and wipe out or cripple the nations that were their Earthly enemies, but that they could "inspire" their friends or dupes or whatever they were to declare war and fight.

In other words, the final battle that might determine whether the Ethereans or the Titans won could very well be a World War III which would really BE something! In that case, which "side" would the United States be on, and who would be her enemy?

That line made no sense either, because the logical enemy of the United States in a war would be Godless Russia.

He shrugged off the whole problem with an irritated frown and picked up the paper again, turning to the comic page.

FRED and Alex, in far-off Asia, felt rough hands pin their arms while cold handcuffs were locked on their wrists. They were pushed together and surrounded by a compact guard.

At the same time the strong searchlight that made the landscape bright as day went out. It was replaced by series of lights which marked the edges of a landing strip.

A quarter of a mile away a plane was coming in. Fred's heart beat against his ribs painfully as he watched it switch on its landing lights and

slowly settle. Louise HAD to be on it.

Beside him Alex, too, was craning his neck in order to watch the approaching plane. It coasted to a stop a hundred feet away. As the propellers came to a stop a door in the plane opened.

One man dropped to the ground. Louise appeared in the opening, hesitated, then jumped. After her came another man.

"Thank God," Alex muttered.

Fred felt a dull choking pain in his chest as he watched Louise come toward them, escorted by the two men who had been on the plane. She hadn't seen him and Alex yet.

"Louise!" he called out hoarsely.

She heard his voice and saw him. One of her guards tried to grab her as she broke into a run. He missed, and she ran, half stumbling, toward Fred and her brother Alex.

"Oh, Fred, Alex," she sobbed. Then she reached Fred and threw her arms around him. He bent his head and rubbed his cheek against her hair, tenderness and pain in his eyes.

She discovered he was handcuffed, turned to her brother and saw the handcuffs on him, and looked around at the soldiers, taking in their features.

Someone issued an order in a language she couldn't understand. Soldiers converged on her and seized her. When they released her she was handcuffed also.

The three of them were marched toward a small building at the edge of the field.

When they reached it they were pushed into a room and the door closed behind them.

"I'm glad they didn't separate us," Alex said. "Now, sis, how did they treat you? Are you all right? If any of them so much as harmed a little finger of you I'll kill them all, one at a time."





"Oh, Fred," she sobbed, and threw herself into his arms. He bent his head and clasped her to him

"I'm all right," she reassured him. Her eyes rested on Fred for a moment with a caress. "But why was I kidnapped? Those men seem to be soldiers. Chinese soldiers! The men with me on the plane don't seem to be quite Chinese;—sort of Mongolian, though I had always imagined a Mongolian to be sort of fat, and they were all sort of skinny and tall."

"I wish I knew," Alex groaned. "I think it was all a carefully laid scheme to get me to fly my ship over here and land it so they could steal it. But why? It would take a highly industrialized country to manufacture them in any great number. China can't do it. Neither could Mongolia."

"What interests me," Fred broke in, "is how we are going to get out of here, steal our ship back, and escape to the United States again. That's what we have to do, so we might as well speculate on that and forget the rest."

"You're right," Alex said quietly. "It looks like an impossible job, but we've got to do it some way. With Louise with us now we'd better try something quick. Maybe they'll take her away, and then we'll have to look for her."

The walls of the room were made of crude unbaked bricks. A small opening with heavy bars imbedded in the walls served as a window. The ceiling was of rough planks with clay or cement over it above, visible through the wide cracks.

"Turn around and let me look at your handcuffs, Louise," Fred said. "Maybe I can pick the lock."

HE KNEW nothing about handcuffs and very little about locks, so he examined the cuffs interestedly. Then he had Louise bend over so that he could get a bobby pin from her hair.

He could twist his arms to one side

so that he could just see what he was doing. Slipping the bobby pin in the keyhole he moved it around experimentally with no success.

"Well, this is better than doing nothing," he grunted philosophically.

Alex watched and offered suggestions. He had gone over the room carefully without finding anything that might make escape possible. The door was made of heavy planks with a bolt on the inside and, he remembered, a heavy bar on the outside. There was no furniture in the room. Not even a box or a stool to sit on.

Two hours went by slowly. When Fred grew tired Alex tried his hand at picking the lock on Louise's handcuffs with no more success.

There was a sound of footsteps outside the door. The sound of voices came through, muffled and indistinct. The bar was lifted and the door opened slowly. Both Alex and Fred moved protectively to Louise, and the three watched as the door opened wider.

Framed in the doorway was a man a little over six feet tall, broad-shouldered, with a smooth youthful looking face. His skin was dark and his smoothly combed hair jet black. His eyes were large and round. He was obviously neither Mongolian nor Chinese,—more like a Hindu.

He wore a long robe a grey monks cloth, sleeveless and tight fitting around the neck.

Behind him could be seen several of the Oriental soldiers standing stiffly at attention.

"You are Fred Gibbs, Alex Fairness, and Louise Fairness," he said, smiling.

The three stared at him without answering.

He advanced into the room leisurely, his dark brown arms hanging loosely in the folds of his robe. Louise moved until she was slightly behind Fred.

"I regret very much that we meet under circumstances so unfavorable to you," the man said. There was a ring of sincerity to his voice. "You need not worry. No harm will come to any of you. You see, I have learned of your activities, and felt I should have a talk with you to explain certain things. But of course, I am being rude in permitting you to be subject to the indignity of handcuffs. Guard!"

He turned imperiously to the door. A soldier came in, bowing obsequiously.

"Take off the handcuffs," the man ordered.

Alex, Louise, and Fred chaffed their wrists and stretched their arms to get rid of the stiffness. The men outside held their guns ready, alert for any motion they might make.

"Unfortunately," the Hindu said smoothly, "Mr. Hess, your colleague, did not come along with you. I'm afraid he will have to be dealt with in America. At present, I am told, he remains in his apartment awaiting reports of your whereabouts. If he leaves—"

He walked over to the barred window and looked out, apparently ignoring the three.

"Your ship is being placed in a camouflaged hangar," he said without turning. "A very ingenious ship. My engineers will have a great deal of fun dissecting it. But I hope that by the time they begin you will be on my side and willing to work with them. However, before we have a talk I think you should rest and become yourselves again. You will be escorted to more livable quarters at once. Please don't try to escape. Your ship has been fixed so that its generator can't possibly work until vital parts are replaced. You are in the heart of Inner Mongolia and it would take weeks, months, to escape

on foot, assuming you could elude the search parties that would comb the hills for you in every direction."

With a reassuring smile he left. A nattily attired yellow-skinned officer motioned to them to follow. They went into the hall and followed the officer, the other soldiers following closely.

THE strange Hindu was gone. A G.M.C. army truck outside took them away from the airfield and soon began climbing a narrow road that wound along the side of a hill. It crept to the other side of the hill and they gasped as the valleys below came into view. It became apparent that the airport was hidden high up in a mountain range.

After half an hour of joggling, the truck drew up in front of what seemed to be a large temple. They were led inside.

The room they entered was strange. Small, it was dominated by a gold statue of the Buddha ten feet tall, so that the sitting Buddha would have stood over fifteen feet. The stone floor was worn smooth by thousands of feet over several hundred years.

The serene face of the Buddha greeted them with inscrutable expression. They each noticed this, somewhat awed. Then the truly incongruous note in this quiet temple of worship struck them.

Standing at the base of the Buddha, dressed in an expensive American business suit complete with starched white shirt and a futuristically patterned bright yellow tie, was a tall thin man with parchment yellow skin, high cheekbones, black beady eyes, and jet black hair combed back in a skull hugging pompadour.

One foot was resting on a temple drum. He was bent over with an elbow resting on the knee. The crease in the

trouser leg where the elbow rested was perfect, as if it had just that day come from the cleaners next door to the drug store in Anytown, U.S.A.

He waved his free arm carelessly, smiled, and said "Hello" casually. Louise gasped audibly, and the serene smile of the inscrutable Buddha seemed to broaden imperceptibly.

The man remained as he was just long enough for the full surprise to be felt by the three Americans, then dropped his foot off the drum and advanced with extended right hand.

"I'm Charlie Wong," he said with a broad smile. Getting no response he good naturedly took Fred's listless hand and shook it warmly.

"You're Fred Gibbs," he said confidently. "And you're Alex Fairness," he said, shaking Alex's hand. Then he bowed slightly to Louise and said warmly, "You're Alex's sister. May I introduce myself? I'm Charlie Wong, born and raised in California."

He glanced around the temple room, grinning.

"You might say I've been soaking up a little of the Oriental atmosphere," he went on. "It's really something, don't you think so?"

"Just what are you?" Fred asked with quiet hostility. "One of these Americanized yellow robots that prides itself on being flawlessly American while delighting in destroying everything American? We had a lot of them during the war. I've often thought if I ever enjoyed killing somebody it would be one of those things."

Charlie laughed tolerantly.

"Oh, no," he said. "I know what you mean, and I feel the same way you do about them. But you've got this whole setup all wrong. You think Mongolia or China or somebody is getting set to start a third war and try to lick the United States. Nothing could be far-

ther from the truth. I'm just as much an American as you three are, even if my skin isn't the same color."

"Then what's all this attempt to steal my ship?" Alex broke in angrily.

"Steal your ship?" Charlie asked in surprise. "Wait a minute, Alex. Don't be too hasty. I know all the circumstances of that ship. I know you built it under the direction of—shall we say an enemy who has won you over?"

"If the Titans are an enemy," Alex said firmly, "Then what are you?"

"Your perspective is all off," Charlie answered confidently. "We're citizens of the United States, but we're also citizens of the Earth. The Titans, mighty and civilized though they are, are trying to infiltrate and take over the Earth. You have a lot to learn and you're going to learn it before you get back to America. Get that straight right now. We could have killed you instead of bringing you here. We didn't because we know you're deluded. Until we are convinced you are incurably traitors on the side of the invading Titans you will stay alive."

ALEX, Fred, and Louise looked at him wide eyed. This was an angle they hadn't thought of. Charlie saw he had made an impression.

"I know how easy it was to think what you are doing is for the good of mankind," he said. "But what if you placed the whole setup on Earth. Suppose Japan had given you the same line about it being best for the world that SHE take over. Of course she would promise to respect the rights of all nations under her domination. But would you for a moment turn traitor to the United States to help carry out such a plan of world domination if it were proposed by me or a representative of Russia or China or Egypt? No! You'd recognize THAT for what it

was,—conquest disguised as being for the good of the world.”

“You’re forgetting a lot of things, assuming you know as much as you seem to,” Fred cut in. “You’re forgetting the Ethereans, the spirits of the dead and their civilization. They’re trying to take over and force us all back to savagery. A religious savagery where science is outlawed and every man has to bow down to an inflexible discipline. You’re forgetting that the Titans will bring us Ultimate science, so that we will be far more advanced in the next ten years than we could be by ourselves in a dozen centuries.”

“You really fell for all that,” didn’t you!” Charlie said pityingly. “You ARE babes. Did the Titans tell you under what conditions we would receive all these benefits? I think they left that point alone, didn’t they? We would become a vassal planet, taxed in men and materials as they see fit without being able to have a voice in the matter. We would be that way until the people of Earth were distributed throughout the universe and the Titans themselves formed the majority of the population of the Earth. Sure we would be part of a super-civilization, but only as servants and slaves,—not equals.”

“So you’re with the Ethereans,” Louise said slowly.

“Hmmm,” Charlie grinned. “If anything, they’re worse than the Titans. They wouldn’t even allow you civilization. If they take over, the whole world will be reduced to small colonies where everybody has to work, and the pursuit of pleasure is taboo. Also, they have little respect for life. They think living is just a necessary evil to be gotten over quickly, and the sooner the better.”

“Then who ARE you, or who do you represent?” Alex asked.

“I’m an American,” Charlie said

seriously. “But more than that, I am an Earth citizen. There are lot’s of us,—all organized into a world-wide society under various guises. Sit down over there on those stone benches while I tell you a little more about us.” He pointed to stone benches lining the wall of the room.

“Now,” he said after they had sat down, while he himself remained standing. “Thousands of years ago before the dawn of known history, and geography was much different than today, a group of men started an organization. This organization still exists, with headquarters near here. In the archives of this headquarters are the books and knowledge of all ages and of all races. It has continued to exist because neither the Ethereans nor the Titans could find it and destroy it. The continent of Pan was destroyed because once the headquarters were known to be there; but fortunately the leaders escaped.

“In various ways it has managed to guide the human race upward all these thousands of years, until today it stands once more on the threshold of true and lasting civilization. Now something has happened.

“This something is called Armageddon. I want to tell you about that. There are two galactic empires;—one of spirits of the dead, the other of races of the living. Each of them goes around planting human life on inhabitable planets and letting it develop by itself until it reaches the stage of civilization. Until that stage is reached it is let alone except for occasional raiding forays by the Ethereans to gather slaves which later will become full fledged Ethereans.

“When civilization and science comes to such a planet, however, two things are inevitable. One, the scientists devise an instrument for com-

munication with the spirits of the dead, thus removing occultism and spiritualism from the realm of fantasy to the realm of science. Two, the technicians develop space travel.

"THE first brings about what is known as the spiritual revolution. On the Earth it would mean that rather than a few billions of citizens there will be thousands of billions of them, the vast minority alive, and the vast majority spirits of the dead. They are here now, but without that instrument for direct communication they are separated by a barrier that makes each section of humanity deny the existence of the other part to a great extent.

"When that instrument comes, in a few hundred years the two halves of humanity consolidate into a purely materialistic civilization where the spirits of the dead and the living people work together to the betterment of both; and become so powerful as a unit that they can withstand the occasional raids of the Ethereans and even fight off a concentrated assault by the Titans.

"That is especially so when space travel comes and terrestrial defenses extend into space away from the planet. That's the reason for Armageddon. The planet MUST be captured by one or the other of the giant galactic groups and kept under heel, or the time will come when it demands to be recognized as an equal on its own rights and powers.

"On most planets Armageddon is simple. The race native to the planet doesn't realize until too late. But here on Earth we have this age old group that has been able to learn all this and be forewarned. The Earth is fifth-columned to the core by both groups. You have been dupes of the Titans up to now. I hope when you leave here it will

be different with you and your eyes will be open."

"What of this organization you speak of?" Fred asked.

"I can't tell you much about it of a specific nature," Charlie said cautiously. "I can tell you this much, however. Practically every large society and religion are connected with it, either directly or through its leaders alone. In those that are too democratic this organization has many key figures that manage to steer the group along the best path and keep the world organization closely knit. Name ANY international society of any kind, ancient or recently formed, and it is almost certain the leaders know directly of this central organization. Their teachings and edicts guide the rest of humanity. But more than that, the government of nearly every major country is dominated by us behind the scenes, except where the Titans and the Ethereans have worked into leadership and control.

"Where there are wars and aggression you can be sure that Ethereans have a major hand in it. Where there are efforts at world domination by a single nation you can be sure the Titans are working. But remember, neither group can take the helm directly. Their minions are like riders on a giant horse. They can steer it to a certain extent, but the horse (nation) has its own head."

"That sounds interesting," Fred broke in. "According to that, then, Russia is dominated by the Titans, and Germany has always been under control of the Ethereans."

"Right," Charlie answered. "You can go even farther, however. Wherever a nation has engaged in a long program of spontaneous development and expansion whose trend has been either for scientific advancement

or the civilizing of a backward part of the world, you can be sure we, the Earth group, have been at the helm. Where such nations have had to contend with a native religion that held the people in savage degradation and slavery, we have had to fight the Ethereans. Where scientific advance has had to overcome the domination of religion, we have had to overcome the minions of the Ethereans. And slowly we have raised the world up by its bootstraps."

"Hmm," Fred said thoughtfully. "According to that picture it would seem that England has been under your control for centuries, and America from the start."

"YES," Charlie agreed. "China has been ours from the beginning of history. Japan has ever been the stronghold of the Titans, and India of the Ethereans. Neither group has cared to bother too much with things up to now, letting progress take its own course. The Ethereans raid the Earth for slaves every few hundred years. The Titans make occasional surveys and let things alone, waiting for the day when the human race has so evolved that it can be incorporated as a planet colony without too much trouble."

"Suppose we assume all you say is the truth," Fred said. "Then I have a few questions to ask you. Why couldn't the Titans land on Earth and contact civilized society, and set up scientific schools and otherwise help us like the United States helped the Philippines? Why couldn't the Ethereans do the same? And, finally, if the organization here on Earth you speak of is all you claim, why don't its leaders come out in the open and do the same? Those questions really puzzle me. It's all this vague secrecy,—this incredible power and civilization on a cosmic

scale screened from the gaze of the common man, that has me puzzled."

For the first time a serious expression flitted over Charlie Wong's face. There was almost a haggard expression lurking there behind the black eyes, under the flawless yellow skin.

"Either the Titans or the Ethereans could destroy the Earth completely any time they so choose," he said. "But also, neither can hurt the other. Their defenses against each other are perfect. I'm sure of that, though I of course haven't the slightest knowledge of how it is done, or even how they could destroy the Earth. Armageddon to them is what a chess game is to us. They have set up elaborate rules of conduct in the game. If either side breaks a rule it is the same as it would be if you and I were playing chess together and one of us cheated. The other would clear the board and declare the game over. The prize they are playing for is the chess board itself, and the men on it.

"I've studied the game and am beginning to make some sense out of it. Broadly, they move the players only by inspiration. If a player, moved by inspiration, contacts them directly, the rules aren't violated. If they contact a player directly the rules ARE violated.

"I think the object of the game is for one side to so shape civilization that the Earth is only fit for domination by that side. I think the Titans try to bring about successful space travel and direct communication by scientific means with the spirits of the dead. If they can bring that about successfully and make it widespread, with all nations doing it, then they win."

"I think that the Ethereans try to bring about destruction of scientific civilization, inspiring a strong nucleus of humans to segregate from the scientific civilization into self governing

colonies, or groups within the scientific civilization itself, that concentrate on development of the spirit alone, and on the belief that the physical life is nothing more than a prelude to eternity as a spirit. If they can do that, then civilization and its science ends in a great global war, leaving only the disciples of Etherea alive. If they can do that, THEY win.

AFTER one side has won Armageddon, a treaty giving the planet to the winner is signed by both sides and the loser withdraws permanently. In that way the war between the Titan and the Etherean civilizations is confined to the newer planets rather than being spread over the entire galaxy, and aside from the new planets there is peace and order."

"Then Armageddon is not a war like the Bible pictures it!" Fred exclaimed. "Or is it?"

"It's a war all right," Charlie said dryly. "Both the first and second World Wars are battles in the war of Armageddon. And Armageddon still goes on, only now it is a 'cold war.' OUR side is maneuvering into place now to bring about a stalemate."

"How could you bring about a stalemate?" Alex spoke up. "And how would a stalemate work out?"

"In order for either the Titans or the Ethereans to win," Charlie said, "The victory must be complete. If, for example, the Ethereans bring about their anti-war religious colonies, and the Titans bring about their space travel and direct spirit communication by instrument, and the Ethereans can't incite civilization to war, while the Titans can't dissolve the religious colonies, then there is a stalemate. Both sides would then withdraw, setting up a barrier about the solar system or maybe only the Earth which would

prevent the space ships from working through to outer space."

"I see," Alex said. "Then our capture was to convert us to your side to effect a stalemate?"

"Yes," Charlie said. "And now I've said all I can. Our Leader will talk with you later. Meanwhile you will be taken to living quarters and may consider yourselves guests or prisoners, whichever you prefer."

He straightened up and smiled thinly.

"I may as well warn you," he added on a final note. "Unless the Leader can convert you to our side you will never leave here. The Titans will have to find somebody to take your place. What worries me though," he frowned, "is that the Titans might come to the conclusion that your disappearance is the work of the Ethereans, and that they might decide there has been a violation of rules. In that case they would destroy the Earth."

He turned his back and walked toward a door under the giant Buddha. There he turned and looked back.

"It's really up to you three," he said. "The way it looks to me the whole world is in your hands, and your decision will determine whether we go on living or a Nova is born."

With that he disappeared through the door and it closed noiselessly behind him, its blank surface seeming a curtain through which they could see the Mystery of the East dimly, a mystery that has lain just beyond the ken of modern man since that day, long ago, when three wise men came out of the East . . . following a Star.

TWO priests in shapeless monk-cloth robes seemed to materialize out of nowhere, though they had been standing nearby all the time. One of

them requested the three to follow them.

Alex and Fred looked them up and down, noting their huge build which suggested tremendous muscular strength. Their eyes turned toward the door they had entered. On either side of the door was a cubbyhole in which a giant Mongolian stood impassively.

Shrugging their shoulders, Alex and Fred each took one of Louise's arms possessively and followed the two priests.

They were led through a different door than the one Charlie had used, led along a low-ceilinged corridor which sloped downward, twisting tortuously, and finally entered a suite of underground rooms which were furnished with all the luxury and conveniences which only a blend of the Oriental art and occidental conveniences can achieve.

"What's all this about?" Louise demanded as soon as they were alone. "Did he know we've been on the Titan ship, Coralano? The way he talked he knows all about the Titans, but I couldn't understand what he was driving at."

"I couldn't either," Fred admitted. "These orientals are always rather obtuse. I had a feeling he didn't care particularly whether we followed him or not;—more like he was just talking to be saying something."

"That isn't the way it struck me," Alex said, his eyes exploring the room where he stood. "I think he knew we had been on the Titan space ship, but assumed we had learned far more than we have. Or maybe he pretended that to make us think the Titans were holding back on us and playing us for dupes. If he could make us think we were being traitors to our race he might stand a chance of converting us to his side."

"Well are we?" Louise asked.

"No," Alex said gravely. "I'm sure we aren't. I'm confident the Titans have no intention of making this a slave planet." Yet as he said this Alex remembered the thousands of workers on the Coralano who didn't pause in their tasks as they went by. And in his mind the question rose as to what the Titans would do with the Earth if the Earth governments were to decide upon independence after Armageddon was over. Surely only an iron rule could keep the various nations of the Earth in harmony, and only dictatorial force could make men teach their children to follow without question the way laid down by the Titans. That it might be the best way of life possible made no difference. What would the Titans do with the recalcitrants? Would they force them to leave the planet and become unwilling citizens of other planets? Would the Titans themselves land on Earth in great numbers and live on the fat of the land?

He realized that so far as he knew he MIGHT be just a dupe of a conquering race that would show a different character once they were the overlords of Earth.

Defiantly he thought, "If what Charlie says is not true the Titans SHOULD make it clear to us three. We are natives of the Earth even though we have been brought up under the guidance and inspiration of Titan spirits of the dead."

No answer came. If a Titan spirit heard him it made no answer. Suddenly Alex was extremely tired. He looked at his sister and Fred through heavy-lidded eyes and suggested they find the bedrooms the apartment undoubtedly had and hit the hay.

The three of them moved woodenly. A door near at hand revealed a large bed. Louise started toward it, then

sank wearily to the floor.

Fred and Alex moved to her side as if they were wading in sand. After a few futile tries at lifting her they too sank down.

A look of alarmed suspicion appeared on Alex's face before he sank into unconsciousness. A moment later the deep breathing of the three unconscious people was the only sign of life in the room. The empty bed stood patiently inviting; but there was no one to accept its invitation.

FRED opened his eyes with a feeling that his mind was more awake than it had ever been before. It was a pleasant, rather exhilarating sensation.

Louise was standing above him motioning for him to get up. Behind her was the six foot Hindu they had seen just before being brought to the temple, only now he seemed more like seven feet tall and his head was covered with a large turban in the classic Indian style. His smooth brown youthful face bore a friendly smile.

Fred stood up, started to stretch to send blood into his muscles, and stopped with the strange feeling that he didn't need to stretch. Some psychic instinct made him turn around and look at the spot where he had been.

And suddenly he knew it was just a dream. He was looking at his body as it sat limply in a chair with a head covering from which a cable led to a cabinet nearby. Next to it was the unconscious form of Louise, though she was standing beside him.

The third chair was occupied by the still form of Alex. As Fred looked, Alex seemed to blurr out of focus and separate into two Alexes, one still stationary, the other looking wonderingly at them.

"Get us, Alex," Louise coaxed.

Fred watched Alex go through the

same routine he himself had followed. His face registered surprise and then the realization that it was just a dream.

"Strange," Fred thought to himself, "That not only do I know that I'm dreaming, but that the characters in my dream also believe they are dreaming. It's almost like it might be real and we are somehow separated from our bodies. If that's so, then according to what I seem to know about the soul, then Louise, Alex, and the Hindu are just thought objects and I can pass through them. I'll-see if I can pass through Louise."

He moved close to her and put his arm around her. She seemed as solidly warm and alive as in real life. She was looking up at him. He leaned down and kissed her upturned lips. There was nothing ghostly in her response!

So it was just an unusually vivid dream; but then he had been very tired when he fell asleep. That would account for it.

Having made up his mind he was dreaming, Fred took on a tolerant good natured mood. There was nothing to lose. No matter what happened he was safely asleep and would wake up sometime. Perhaps he could wake up right now if he chose. If he did he might not be able to recapture the dream and it was very pleasant with his arm around Louise.

He grinned at the Hindu.

"Where to, Salami?" he asked mockingly.

"Follow where I lead," the Hindu replied, unruffled. "And," he grinned good naturedly, "you may address me as Master. I have lived for seventy-nine thousand years. During that time I have even come to know what a salami is."

"Master sounds undemocratic," Fred said. "Don't you have a name?"

BUT the Hindu had turned his back and seemed not to hear. He started across the room and Fred followed, his arm still around Louise's waist. With the beginning of walking the room vanished. They seemed to arrive instantly at their destination.

It was a room and yet not a room. The walls and ceiling had a way of retreating as you watched them, and closing in when you forgot about them for a moment. When they retreated they did so rapidly at the start, slowing down after a mile or two so that they barely crept.

There were hundreds, thousands, perhaps even millions of people in the room watching them. The walls, in their sly attacks and retreats, seemed to pass through these people and hide them, then retreat and reveal the people as they were.

The Hindu mounted what seemed to be a platform of misty grey which might have been a cloud if its outlines were not so smooth and sharply defined. Obeying some subconscious command Fred, Louise, and Alex moved until they were standing at the base of the platform facing the Hindu.

There was a hushed thunder of countless voices chanting a ritual of greeting which ended when the Hindu raised his arm.

For the first time Fred noticed a jewel in the base of the Hindu's turban over the forehead. It had been a milky white but now flashed into scarlet brilliance, spokes of light radiating from it.

Thoughts faster than ordinary thought seemed to carry on the rays of the jewel. At his back Fred sensed these thoughts being received by the throng and tossed about in systematic patterns. He felt their probing eyes bore into his back and knew that in some way all this concerned him and what was to become of him, Louise,

and her brother Alex.

He felt his eyes drawn upward unaccountably. Far over his head two pale pencils of tangible force were coming slowly downward. Widely spaced, they were converging in his direction, moving a foot or two, pausing, then dropping cautiously lower, lengthening, their upper ends lost in the misty vagueness of the ceiling.

Furtively Fred looked at the Hindu. He seemed unaware of those pale pencils above.

What were they? A hope was rising in Fred's heart that perhaps the Titans had not lost track of their location after all.

A third pencil of energy was now descending rapidly to catch up with the other two. The advancing ends quavered. They were less than twenty feet overhead now, and Fred could see infinitely fine tendrils spreading from the pencil beams, searching.

One of these fine energy threads touched the Hindu and drew back in alarm. Another touched Louise. Instantly the energy pencil closed the gap and sank into Louise's head. She seemed unaware of it.

In the back of his mind Fred wondered why the Hindu didn't notice it and become alarmed. The second pencil dropped quickly to touch Alex on the head.

Then Fred felt a sensation of both ice and fire in his brain. A part of his mind seemed to go dead. Yet he knew that to all outward appearances he was still the same. But not quite. He was experiencing a peculiar lassitude as if all his thoughts had to go a great distance.

"It's like the voltage drop in a line when it's overloaded," he thought. "Like a telephone line when too many party line eavesdroppers are listening in."



The Hindu mounted the platform and stood before him. All about was a multitude of chanting people.



A CHANGE was taking place in his awareness. The superswift thoughts tossing about between the Hindu and the audience was becoming intelligible. At the same time a flow of mental energy and strength seemed to be seeping into his mind from the cold-hot contact of the energy pencil.

With almost an audible click as of a lock turning, his mind slipped into the action of the multiple mind of the Hindu and the countless hosts in the room. He became aware with a sort of awe of the incredible complexity and perfection of that mass mind, whose ego center was the mind of the Hindu on the platform.

He was now a part of it and yet separate. Idly he seized on a thought in that mind and altered it, and knew that that mind was not aware of him in the same way a single mind is not aware of subconscious influence on thought.

He discovered he could explore this vast mind at will. The more he probed the more amazed he became. He found in truth that the mind of the Hindu was seventy-nine thousand years old. He discovered more. The thousands upon thousands of minds in tune with it were the spirits of the dead-of ages past, who were allied with this ancient-young Hindu;—that they were also the minds of living men! Men whose spirits were old and had re-incarnated for hundreds or thousands of successive lifetimes and become wiser than an ordinary man and more experienced.

Not all of them were the spirits of men now living, however. Many, perhaps most of them, were spirits who had grown tired of life in the body, and remained separate. Some seemed to have a special badge of distinction. He analyzed this and discovered that these individuals were those whose body the

Master had usurped. As a reward for losing their native body they had been given special privileges and development greater than they would have attained otherwise.

Here's then, was the secret of the East! It was all as clear to Fred as if it were part of his own life experience in that moment of full comprehension. In all countries, among all races, in high places and in lowly hovels, were the adepts of the East, living as ordinary men but with re-incarnated spirits of men who had lived in Lemuria, Atlantis, ancient Egypt, and in places and times completely forgotten by history!

Here, too, were the religious and intellectual leaders of modern times, for they were in reality re-incarnations of these ancient spirits.

AND in this place they often congregated to blend into a mass intellect, One with the ancient Master who had adopted them into his Destiny and been their leader.

Here, too, were new initiates of all races and countries who were with them for the first time. Curious, trembling, yet unable to be more, as yet, than just idle members.

Here somewhere, lost in the vast assembly, was the spirit of a mailman in Detroit, Michigan; and near him, hovering over him, was the spirit of a leader in a well known school of occultism who was himself a re-incarnated soul that had first known itself in ancient Atlantis.

Here was another who had narrowly missed being captured by the Ether-eans on their last raid in 1848. Another was nearby who was well skilled in evading the hunting Ethereans.

Fred marvelled that he could "sink" into the very being of any of those assembled and be aware of all their

memories at once, and in perfect detail. This was something MORE than just mind and thinking. Was it an effect produced by the perfect harmony and blending of all these minds into One?

Almost fearfully he expanded his awareness to take in the mass mind. It was a rushing torrent that rocked his very soul. He felt that but for that incredibly thin pencil of pale energy that held him fast he would have been swept into the depths of time and space beyond recall. It held him fast and secure. It was a lifeline tied to a man being swept into a rushing torrent of a mountain stream as it bounced in frothing rebound from dangerous boulders on its journey toward the sea.

The vast, incredible complexity of that group mind poured into his consciousness. He adjusted himself to it slowly. He absorbed its full effect.

Within his own consciousness were the minds of all these thousands and millions of devotees to this Oriental Master; and even the mind of that Master was open to him and belonged to him. They all belonged within his own finite mind, and yet they were totally unaware of the change.

A feeling of mastery and power came over him. He was as a God. The fingers of his consciousness reached out hungrily, crying, "More. MORE."

Into his mind came the vision of a woman standing behind a counter examining a necklace. She was trying to get him to reduce the price. The store behind her was there in detail.

And suddenly he knew he was the clerk, and all the clerk's life came into consciousness.

A lecture room in a university crept into his consciousness, but strangely dual. A man was talking from a platform. He could see that man and yet he WAS that man,—and he was also one of those students who listened. And

still he was the clerk in the store in Calcutta selling a necklace to an English woman.

His mind expanded, hungry with power, holding all it touched. He became thousands of people, their memories, their immediate experiences and thoughts. The visions of millions of eyes came to him with full awareness. In his mind was the entire world as seen through hundreds of thousands of pairs of eyes. In it was the history of the present as being lived by the owners of those eyes.

And still he cried, "MORE. MORE!" His mind lunged at the barrier to its expansion while the mass mind of the group cried "There IS no more. You have All!"

In spaceless, directionless surges of mind he lunged against a barrier he could not perceive or comprehend. Then suddenly it gave way. He was through!

And he knew the TRUTH.

CHAPTER VI

"WAKE up Fred." It was Louise's voice. Her hand was gently shaking his shoulder as she spoke.

"Mmmm," he muttered sleepily, opening his eyes. He was laying on a richly colored rug of Oriental design. Louise was bending over him, a pleasant smile on her face. Alex lay nearby, softly snoring.

A few feet further was a large bed. Memory returned. How many centuries had it been since they had tried to reach that bed?

He shook his head with a vague feeling that he had forgotten something he should remember. His eyes turned to Louise with a heavy scowl of perplexity.

At her anxious look he shrugged off his thoughts and put his arms around

her waist.

"I thought you were being mad at me for waking you," she pouted. "I was getting lonesome, being awake all by myself."

They both laughed at the incongruity of the thought.

Alex awoke and sat up. He looked at them and then at the bed.

"Boy, oh boy!" he exclaimed. "We sure must have been sleepy!" Unsteadily he rose to his feet, stretched luxuriously and nearly dislocated his jaw with a huge yawn.

"What we need now is a shower and some breakfast," Fred said. "You first Louise, while I phone for something to eat."

He walked confidently across the room to a cabinet and opened a door, revealing a hidden phone. It didn't occur to him to wonder how he knew it was there.

Without thinking he dialed a number. Giving a few terse orders he hung up. The sound of Louise singing under the shower could be heard.

"Let's take the other bathroom," Alex suggested.

"How do YOU know there's another bathroom?" Fred asked sharply.

"Well, YOU know, don't you?" Alex asked.

"Of course!" Fred exclaimed. "But how could YOU—" He stopped abruptly, a look of surprise on his face.

His and Alex's eyes locked as they looked deeply into each other's soul. There was a mutual grin of sheer enjoyment on their faces. By common consent they broke the spell and went into the other bedroom and were soon under the shower.

"You know, Alex," Fred said with his eyes full of soap. "Something's changed in some way. I feel like I'd always been the way I am now, yet I have a queer feeling that I'm not at

all like I was when we went to sleep last night."

"I have the same feeling," Alex confessed. "What is it?"

"Damfino," Fred muttered. "A couple of times I've almost had it, then it slips away."

"Sure funny," Alex said, his voice muffled by a stream of water running over his face as he rinsed off. "I'd swear I didn't dream all the time we were asleep; and if we got up and walked it must have been in our sleep so far as I'm concerned. But **SOME-THING'S** different."

Fred chuckled.

"What's so funny?" Alex laughed.

"Nothing," Fred said. "I just remembered a fellow I knew once who insisted that if you can't remember a dream you didn't have one even if you did have one."

"Why that's nonsense," Alex objected. "A dream still lies in the subconsciousness, and the totality of the subconscious influences, if not controls absolutely, the thinking of our conscious mind."

"So this 'change' exists in our subconscious minds," Fred said triumphantly. "Whatever it is, it happened to both of us. Maybe to Louise too!"

"I have a feeling," Alex said seriously, "That whatever it is, all our troubles are over. I'd even be willing to bet that after breakfast we'll be escorted back to my ship and permitted to go home."

"If that's the case let's get this shower over with," Fred said. His hand darted out and flicked a faucet handle.

"WOW!" Alex yelled, jumping out of the shower. "What IS that stuff,—liquid oxygen?"

"Feels like it," Fred said, shutting it off and stepping out. "Must be spring water to be that cold."

WHEN they dressed and went out into the living room the breakfast had already come. Louise was busy taking things off trays and setting them in place on a table.

Fred felt a tightness in his throat as he looked at her.

"She's so lovely," he thought. She caught his intense stare, smiled confusedly and then quickly bent over and hid her confusion in the task of setting the table. But in the instant she had looked at him she had read his question and flashed her acceptance. The question he would ask when the moment was right, and her answer, would be superfluous. Each of them knew it and knew that the other knew it.

They had barely finished breakfast when a knock sounded on the door. Alex opened it. Standing on the other side was the Hindu they had seen at the airport where they had been captured.

The brown color of his skin seemed to exude cool warmth and his smile matched it.

"Come in," Alex said. "We've been expecting you."

"Why?" the Hindu asked, entering.

"How should I know," Alex said. "Today we just know things without knowing why."

"You should speak more respectfully to this man, Alex," Fred said quietly. "He is Buddha in the flesh. Actually and literally he is!"

"Pardon me while I beat my head on the floor," Alex said.

"Fortunately I can understand your native humor," the Hindu said, walking into the room and sitting down in a large overstuffed chair. "Ordinarily humor is the most colloquial form of speech. In many parts of the world one has to be born and raised in almost a particular community to understand

the subtleties of the humor prevalent in that spot. In my one thousand four hundred and eighty-six successive lives I have encountered every possible form of humor, so even your most original joke, Alex, is to me just an old saw." He smiled broadly and placed the tips of his fingers together. "I believe it was Adam, wasn't it, that first pulled that head pounding gag?"

He watched with evident relish the expression of amazement on Alex's face. There was a twinkle in his eyes for a moment, then they sobered.

"Yes," he went on, "I am Buddha. Few there are who know that I am also Lord of Earth. It is my guiding hand that shaped Christianity and also Mohammedanism into mighty international systems. In America you undoubtedly know of many companies that have two or three different stores in the same neighborhood, each with a different name and each seemingly competing against the others, yet all owned by the same man. It is an old idea which I probably originated myself."

"So you are Christ and Mohammed too!" Alex exclaimed.

The Hindu shook his head.

"No, I am just Buddha. I am not even he in the real sense of the word, but Gautama was the Buddha for so short a time compared to my tenure in office that I really have more of a right to that name."

"There is an old saying that it is a foolish tailor that makes all his clothing from the same pattern. Scholars have recognized the similarities in the three great religions that dominate nine tenths of the people on Earth. If those similarities existed in three great novels under different pen names those same scholars would at once conclude that the author of the three was a single man. Yet in the case of the great

schools of religion they cannot make such a bold step. Their minds hesitate. They cannot conceive of one being tailoring three or a dozen competing systems so that they all fit into the philosophical acceptances of most people."

"You mean," Alex demanded, "That you, the Buddha, founded Christianity?"

"Yes," the Hindu confessed calmly. "It was I who was really behind the scenes at the Council of Nice. It was also I who taught the first great Protestant and directed the flowing out of the Christian structure from its original inflexible pattern so that it could adapt itself to the many variations to come in occidental thought."

"IT WAS I who inserted the prophecy of the second coming in all great religions, and the prophecy of a first coming, or the coming of a great leader, in all the minor religions and schools of thought. At the time the two great extraterrestrial civilizations were laying the groundwork for the final struggle I slipped out of hiding at opportune times and added my bit to shape the future to my own ends. Even then I had decided that both great groups in contact with the Earth were partly wrong in their metaphysical basics, and that, given time, I could demonstrate the truth of my belief. I couldn't do it with an Earth covered with half-civilized barbarians. I had to have a united Earth,—a civilization with me at the head; highly developed and industrialized and also, highly developed morally and spiritually. My plan was and may yet be to appear as the Great Leader. That will depend on the outcome of the conference now going on up above."

"Say," Fred said. "While you've been talking my mind has been churn-

ing in a very funny way. I seem to half remember hearing all this in a dream last night, though I can't even remember dreaming anything. If I DID dream I have a feeling you were in it some way, Buddha."

"Last night," the Hindu said softly, "You were for a moment greater than I,—greater than the Titans or the Ethereans. Someday you will again be so. Though I am your Master I will be your servant."

"Boy, you Orientals get me dizzy in a hurry," Alex said. "Me for a simple little welding machine and two pieces of metal to weld together. That's something I can handle. Speaking of welding, how soon can we take off in our ship and go back to St. Louis?"

"Any time you wish," the Hindu answered sadly. "I would prefer you to stay for another twenty-four hours, though. In that time many things will be settled."

"What do you mean?" Alex asked.

"I see that you don't quite 'just know things,' as you claimed when I entered," the Hindu smiled. "I mean that my greatest defense weapon,—my only one in fact, was secrecy. The Titans and Ethereans were not only ignorant of my existence, but also of my secret location. That is changed now. There is a conference going on between the leaders of the Earth expeditionary forces of the two giant republics. Within the next twenty-four hours they will decide either to destroy me or to depart and let me develop things here in my own way."

"NOW I can remember a little!" Fred said, his face lighting up with wonder. "It was I! In some way I saw something that changed everything from what it was going to be."

"You saw," the Hindu said, a wry expression on his smooth features, "the thing I had hoped to see if given a

thousand years with a perfected civilization on Earth and no interference from outside. Your mind is slightly different than the norm. Bulwarked by stabilizing forces from Titan machines you were able to consciously do something alone which I have not been able to do with the group mind I have built up over a period of many centuries."

"What did I do?" Fred asked.

"I don't know," the Hindu said.

"Oh, Lord!" Alex moaned. "Here we go again."

"But it's the truth!" the Hindu exclaimed. "I DON'T know. What Fred saw is beyond my ability to comprehend at present. I believe it is beyond the abilities of even the Ethereans or the Titans. And certainly it's beyond Fred's ability to express in normal ways. We, the extraterrestrials and I, could only know that he DID see it and comprehend it. We know that from his emotional shock and the validity of his reaction to the discovery."

"Then isn't it Fred who should have your job if the Titans and the Ethereans decide to leave us alone?" Louise spoke up.

THE Hindu looked at her through veiled eyes, opened his mouth as if to say something, then philosophically shrugged his shoulders and closed his mouth.

Alex shot his sister an admiring glance. She nodded at him in triumph.

Fred seemed oblivious of all this. His eyes held a faraway look and his mind was thousands of miles away. Just beyond the reach of his mental fingers something poised invitingly,—just out of reach. For countless millions of years two great galactic groups had gone their separate ways, and Armageddon had been their only point of contact. At this common point lay the Solution,—the answer that would

eventually make all mankind, wherever it might be found, into one united Whole. He had found it. He would find it again,—or perhaps it would be this Hindu,—Buddha, the spiritual leader of the world, who would find it. It didn't matter who so long as it were found again.

His mind jerked back to the present with a start that made him jump physically.

"Well, Buddha," he said matter-of-factly. "I think we'd better be getting out of here. After all, we are stooges of the Titans. If they decide to destroy you we'd better be out of the way."

He walked to the door and turned.

"Will we have any trouble getting away?" he asked.

"There is a car waiting outside, the temple. Instructions have been issued to allow you to depart in your,—flying saucer."

"Come on, Louise, Alex," Fred said. He stood aside to let them precede him.

He glanced at the Hindu before closing the door behind him. On the Hindu's face was a bleak expression.

"I hope we meet again soon," Fred said softly. The Hindu seemed not to hear.

In the temple room standing near the giant statue of the classic Buddha was Charlie Wong, dressed in an expensive outfit,—two-toned shoes, slacks, and a sport coat. Lined up beside him were three matched travel cases.

As they emerged from the passage door into the temple room Charlie daintily flicked ashes from his cigaret onto the stone floor worn smooth by thousands of bare feet and gave them a broad smile.

"Today I'm a hitchhiker," he said smoothly. "How about a ride to St. Louis? Or maybe you'd land near Los Angeles and drop me off."

Alex looked at Fred and Louise,

amused.

"Why not?" he asked.

Taking this for acceptance, Charlie picked up his three travel bags and struggled along behind them. His long plastic cigaret holder was held at a jaunty angle, and he left a trail of smoke across the room that mingled with the incense smoke from the altar of the Buddha.

The driver of the jeep waiting outside was a small Chinese private in the nationalist uniform. He hopped out hastily and helped Charlie with his bags.

The jeep started up and bounced along the road. Fred, Alex, and Louise turned and looked back at the temple before it was lost to view. Somehow it seemed — lonely, as if the living Buddha who waited below it had imparted to the temple where common man might worship him some of his brooding, lonely spirit.

Charlie didn't look back. His eyes darted continually to either side of the road taking in the scenery while he hummed a popular American tune between his gleaming white teeth as they gripped the plastic cigaret holder.

"Nice climate up here," he said carelessly to the driver, expertly performing a miracle of jiu jitsu with the frame of the jeep to keep from being tossed out and over the edge of the cliff when the jeep bounced over a fallen rock.

"Where is this place, Charlie," Fred said loudly.

"Don't know exactly," Charlie said, turning his head so that his neatly combed jet black hair mussed in the wind of the rushing car. "It's considerably north of Tibet though. I doubt if a white man has ever been within a hundred miles of the place with the exception of those brought in; and none of them ever learned exactly where

they were. Most Mongolians could tell you where it is, but it's part of their religion to keep it secret. Gengis Khan was born less than five hundred miles from this spot. I've been told, though I don't know for sure, that Stalin comes here often for weeks at a time."

HE TURNED his head forward again, then twisted around with an afterthought.

"I've been here for two weeks now," he added. "It's a nice country, but will I be glad to get back to the good ol' U.S.A.!"

"You mean this is the headquarters for communism?" Louise exclaimed, bending forward and shouting.

"Heck no!" Charlie said, twisting around again. "The Big Boy has his fingers in everything. He's been working at elevating every race to some semblance of civilization for a long time, and with every race it takes something different. The trouble is he can't always control it as well as he'd like to. Most of the time he just takes something the Ethereans or the Titans start and twists it a little to adapt it to his own plans. Communism was that way too. He didn't start communism, but saw how he could use it to industrialize Russia. It's getting out of bounds a little now."

He watched the expressions on the faces of the three in the back seats and grinned widely at them before facing to the front again.

"I don't think he knows what he's talking about," Louise said in a low voice to Fred. "To listen to everybody you'd think they alone were responsible for everything that's either good or bad, and sometimes I get the impression that everybody seems to be right. But they CAN'T be, since they all disagree!"

"You're wrong, darling," Fred said.

"They're ALL right even though they all disagree. I don't know how, and yet I do. I don't know how because I don't know any way to grasp it. I do know how because I saw it and know I saw it."

"Yak yak," Alex said. "You sound like me in grade school when I told the teacher I DID know when Columbus discovered America, but I couldn't remember it."

The airport came into sight ahead. Alex's ship stood on the runway, the sun reflecting from it in blinding concentration. The jeep slowed down as it reached the edge of the strip and headed toward the ship.

Chinese soldiers with rifles slung across their shoulders stood around as the four jumped down from the jeep and went to the steps leading into the belly of the ship.

The small though energetic jeep driver struggled after them with Charlie's bags.

Fred pulled the steps up and closed the hatch while Alex ran up to the pilot room and started the generators.

In a few moments the ship lifted from the airstrip and hovered while the landing wheels retracted into the shell. Those inside were pressed back into their seats by the hands of an invisible giant as Alex pulled down the acceleration lever.

To those outside, the ship seemed to simply disappear in a streak of faintly luminous light that swept to the distant horizon to the east.

Though the sun where they left was not yet overhead, it soon climbed up and then sped rapidly toward the western edge of the sky.

Louise and Fred sat side by side in the ship. Charlie sat beside Alex, his eyes glued most of the time to the view scopes, watching the rapidly passing scenery below with wonder.

FROM time to time his eyes pulled away to look at the speedometer needle, hovering near the two thousand mark.

"What's the matter, Charlie?" Alex asked finally. "Think it's out of order?"

"But how CAN this ship go two thousand miles an hour?" Charlie asked. "Surely the air resistance would be thousands of tons at that speed!"

"It would if we were encountering it," Alex agreed. "You see, Charlie, there's a wedge of energy that goes out ahead of us and parts the air very gently so that when we get to any spot there isn't much air to offer resistance. We're travelling in practically a vacuum all the time."

"And if that wedge of energy failed?" Charlie asked.

"Don't even think of it," Alex said, beads of perspiration forming on his forehead at the thought. "It would be like hitting a wall of solid concrete at this speed."

"There's the coast of California!" Charlie exclaimed a few hours later. "But there's something funny off to one side. It's a lot of points of light that form a sort of arrow."

Alex quickly looked. It was the same thing that had happened before! The arrow pointed steeply upward.

"Looks like we're heading for the Coralano again," he said to Fred and Louise.

"Can't you drop me off first?" Charlie asked nervously.

For answer Alex put the ship in a steep climb that matched the direction of the arrow.

Charlie turned a distinct shade of green. Fred and Alex laughed.

"It's no joke," Charlie said. "There's no telling what they'll do to me. Those Titans killed several of my men not long ago, and they know it was me that

sent them to get your ship."

"This trip isn't on account of you," Fred said positively. "They can catch up with you any time. This must have something to do with that 'conference' going on."

Hours later the giant ship Coralano came into sight. As they approached within a few miles of it they could see something strangely different about it. Near it, and hundreds of times larger, space seemed to be warped into a fluctuating sphere of force that hurt the eyes. This sphere seemed almost to touch the giant Titan space ship.

As before, Alex relaxed the controls and let the ship land on the Coralano, controlled from the Titan ship. Charlie hung back when they rushed for the lower deck. He no longer wore the college kid air of youthfulness adopted by so many Orientals in America.

Fred and Louise went ahead, leaving Alex to coax Charlie along.

Garl Frolan was waiting below in much the same position he had been the first time. There was an air of urgency about him now.

"Hurry," he said without preliminary greetings. "Already the Armageddon Council has waited too long for your arrival, Fred. Louise, you and your brother stay here. Be patient. This may take a few hours, but not longer than that."

He took Fred's arm and ushered him into the corridor onto the moving walk. Fred turned his head and waved a frantic good-bye to Louise.

GARL fidgeted impatiently at the slowness of the walk, drumming his fingers nervously on the handrail. When the walk brought them to the longitudinal corridors inside the shell, where the centrifugal force of the ship provided normal weight, there was a car. When they climbed in it started at

once and sped swiftly along the narrow strip of floor.

The other time there had been much foot traffic. Now the corridor was deserted.

"Battle stations," Garl said, reading Fred's unspoken question. "So long as these two ships are near each other with their defense screens down we must be prepared for anything;—especially since such a Council is never held except for drawing up the treaty after Armageddon, and technically war is still on."

It seemed only seconds later to Fred before the car stopped before a large door. Garl jumped off and swung the door open, stepping aside with an eye command that Fred precede him.

The room that Fred stepped into was the strangest he had ever seen. It occupied the full cross-section of the ship and contained row upon row of seats like a theater on Earth. These rows of seats formed a giant rim encircling the inside of the ship and each seat was filled. A mile above, thousands of inverted, seated people turned their eyes on him. The entire band that formed the floor of the room seemed a carpet of staring faces. Each seat could swivel so that its occupant could face whatever object of interest was present before them.

And far up near the center of the giant theater was a transparent platform. Quickly Garl led Fred, between two rows of seats to the smooth wall. An elevator was waiting. It whisked them at breath-taking speed up to a door that let out onto the platform.

There were twelve men seated in a semi-circle. Each of them seemed to be asleep. Yet on their faces was a God-like serenity and expression of intelligence.

"These are our representatives at the Council," Garl said in hushed

tones. "Here. Sit in this chair."

He pointed to a plastic chair at the focus of the arc formed by the twelve unconscious Titans. Above it was a thing that looked somewhat like a dryer in a beauty shop.

Without hesitation Fred sat down. Garl dropped the hood over his head. Fred heard the sound of a switch being turned on. A quiet murmur sounded from the hood, then—

HE was standing on a slightly raised dais. In front of him sat twelve men identical with the sleepers he had just seen, yet their eyes were open and they were keenly awake.

Something seemed to tell him to turn around. He did so, slowly. Facing him, and also facing the twelve Titans, were twelve beings that resembled men only in that they were what men might be after an eternity of perfection and striving-toward the ideal.

From them radiated a force that seemed alive and bathed him with sensation that was almost pain. Pain that intoxicated every nerve of his body and made him able to feel even the corpuscles of the blood in their individual peregrinations and their antlike depositing of food and oxygen, and collecting of waste.

He knew that here speech was out of place. He was a specimen under a mental microscope, yet also he was, in some way undefined, presiding over this Council.

It dawned on him slowly that these twenty-four superbeings were patiently waiting for him to tell them what he knew.

But what did he know?

The full memory of that previous experience flooded into his consciousness. From the wave of excited interest that hit him he knew that this was what he had been called out into space to do.

His memory retraced every step of the way to that lofty pinnacle from which he had looked down on the entire Cosmos, and yet remained in it, and it in him in full consciousness.

ONCE more Buddha was a microscopic segment of his mind, and each detail of his present solution to the enigma lying beneath the metaphysical basics upon which the Titan and Ethereal ideologies rested was held in his mind as a diamond is displayed on dark velvet.

And as the brilliant shafts of light radiating from the facets of a flawless diamond are brought out into perfect clarity by the background of velvet, so the implications and possible ramifications of that Thought of the Buddha were displayed in perfect clarity.

Fred saw once again, and understood. The ethereal light of his consciousness played slowly on each tendon of the woven fabric of logic and things beyond logic.

Yet with a part of his mind he observed the twelve gods of interstellar regions and the twelve Titan lords of planet republics. And in their twenty-four pairs of eyes he saw only dim and partial comprehension.

He probed their minds, and they, feeling his probing, opened their minds willingly and passively. Impersonally he sensed their humbleness. Without emotion he searched the details of their individual lives for thousands of centuries to find analogy or concept to which he could tie what he KNEW.

He sensed that what was going on here might change the whole course of galactic history and unite Ethereal and Titan in a bond of common Truth,—IF he could find the bridge across the abyss between that truth and their illusion.

Like a master swordsman he thrust,

and like perfect swordsmen their minds parried with subconscious counter-thrust.

They too were in infinitely expanded consciousness, and in the common region of agreement their thoughts were as blinding suns illuminating all space, —except for the one region where Fred tried so hard to lead them. To them it was a black empty void. A multi-dimensional sink from which their minds shied instinctively even as they sought to approach it.

But slowly they began to accept the fact of its existence. One by one they withdrew into themselves with the decision to permit Earth to develop its own Destiny unhindered.

When the last of them reluctantly withdrew, Fred felt himself jerked with almost a physical violence. He opened his eyes. There before him were the twelve unconscious Titans, asleep in their chairs, and above and below him, and in a vast ribbon extending on either side, was the carpet of faces of the Titans who watched.

He remembered the hood that had been lowered over him and glance up. It was back in position.

He frowned in deep concentration, trying to remember what had happened after it had been lowered. It seemed that there must have been a passage of time,—perhaps hours or days. Yet he could remember nothing. Or — had there been twelve angels.

It seemed he had seen the twelve sleeping Titans and, facing them, twelve Archangels with giant wings. Angels of God from the infinite heavens! Beings far greater than these ordinary mortals of the space ship, or their lesser cousins, the people of Earth.

Surely something must be wrong. It couldn't be that these people were at eternal war with God! It wasn't necessary to deny the Creator of All to have

the luxuries of a refrigerator, a television set, and football.

Yet,—was it necessary to turn one's back on these things to accept immortality and worship of a Supreme Being?

Where lay the common ground? Did he really know? Vaguely, somewhere in the depths of his superconscious mind just beyond his grasp these thoughts seethed and boiled, sending their vapors to disturb his waking self. He sat and brooded, while facing him twelve sleepers looked blindly back, their spirits 'somewhere' in Council.

CONCLUSION

"HERE's the place," Fred said, turning the car down a narrow lane.

Its headlights bored a hole through the darkness, leading them along the weed choked trail to the water's edge. He brought the car to a stop and shut off the motor and lights.

The mysterious swirling blackness of the Mississippi stretched before them, lights from the opposite bank sending ghostly shadows across the broad expanse of water.

"This is where I was coming when those Mongolian thugs crowded me into a ditch and kidnapped you," he said, his voice clumsy. "I—I was going to ask you something."

"Yes?" Louise said softly.

"Let's turn on the radio," Fred stalled with forced gaiety. It took forever to warm up. He bent close to the dial and twirled it, clearing his throat nervously.

He let out an audible sigh of relief as the loudspeaker began to emit sound.

"—thank the makers of roll proof Baker Boats," it said, "for relinquishing their time for the following broadcast, which brings you Dr. Howard

Briant, the famous evangelist who is converting literally millions to Christianity in his stirring messages over the radio and from the pulpits of churches of all denominations. His talk tonight will be on the subject, 'Christian, Buddhist, Mohammedan, Scientist; are they fundamentally different?' The regular program of roll proof Baker Boats, not a spill in a carload, will be brought to you at this same time tomorrow night. Don't forget, in a Baker you're much safer!"

With a chuckle Fred turned the dial. Soft strains of music satisfied him. He sat back, studiously avoiding looking at Louise. Ol' Man River sprawled before his eyes and seemed to wink at him knowingly from its dark depths.

"Will you marry me, Louise?" Fred blurted suddenly. "That is,—I,—well, with the radio factory in the bag now—; I was sort of cruising out in a nice section of town this afternoon when I wasn't busy, and I saw a house that I thought—" He stopped lamely.

"Yes, Fred," Louise said faintly.

Fred sat up, startled.

"Yes, what," he said hoarsely.

"Yes, I'll marry you, you big dope," she said, ruffling his hair in exasperation.

"Oh boy!" Fred shouted deliriously. He opened the car door and jumped out.

"Wait a minute, Fred," Louise moaned. "Aren't you going to kiss me?"

Fred slid to a stop and came back. He reached in and picked her up, nearly breaking her leg on the steering wheel. She stifled her groan and wondered if all girls had to go through things like this.

Fred carried her as close to the shore of the river as the grass went, then set her down. Bravely she put her arms around his neck and held her face up, hoping Fred would think it had

been his idea.

She sighed contentedly as his lips crushed hers.

"Mmmm," she murmured.

Later they sat side by side on a blanket spread on the grass. The sun was painting the horizon with grey strokes. The date for the wedding had been set and plans for a honeymoon were decided upon.

They had been sitting for some time without speaking, beginning to feel the damp of the morning air, yet hating to end this most wonderful night of their existence.

"What really happened up there in the Coralano?" Louise asked when the silence became awkward.

"I've told you, I don't really know," Fred said. "I do, but it's locked in my subconscious where I can't get at it. All I know is that they sat me in a chair made of transparent plastic and pulled a hood over my head. I blacked out. When I came too I couldn't remember anything that happened. When those twelve Titans that were asleep in the other chairs woke up one of them stepped to a mike and announced that a treaty had been drawn up which allowed a token survey force of both Titans and Ethereans to remain just outside the orbit of Pluto for the next two thousand years, but that all contact with the Earth would be broken by both sides, and the Earth would be permitted to develop along its own destiny lines without interference. They claimed that I had proven to them that if this were done the outcome would be a solution to the basic differences existing between the Titans and the Ethereans so that eventually there might be a merger of the two into one. In some way it seems that I must know something that no one else in the whole universe can learn yet, even when they are able to read my thoughts directly

and accurately."

"But why are you going ahead with the radio factory?" Louise persisted. "That was part of the Titan plan, and I thought they were abandoning it."

"They are," Fred said. "But now it's part of Charlie's plan, or rather that Hindu's,—Buddha's. But he's going to stay in the background and keep pulling the strings just like he always has. The world won't suspect he exists for a long time yet. Not until we have space travel to the planets, spirit communication in every home, and a flying saucer in every garage."

There was another long silence. Then Fred spoke again.

"About the only immediate difference all this will make in the life of the average man is that from now on the United Nations will function more smoothly, and there will be an immediate trend toward universalization of all cults and religions. That will be more pronounced when I announce the special feature built into my radios and give the secret of the circuit to all the radio companies to put in their sets.

"Then there won't be a wall between science and religion any more. There may be a lot of work and friction in getting the living and the dead of the world to adjust themselves to the idea that they must work together for the good of both. A lot of problems will come up. I suppose there are a lot of henpecked husbands that will curse the invention that makes it possible for their wives to heckle them even when they die. Hey—I didn't mean that!"

Fred jumped up and ran, with Louise at his heels, pounding on his back when she could reach him.

He stopped and turned suddenly, and she fell into his arms before she could stop. He kissed her while she pulled his hair. Then her hands slid around his neck.

"Mmm," she murmured.

After a while he released her and took one of her hands, starting back toward the car.

"Let's go home," he said, glancing at the sun, peering above the fields across the river.

THE END

TRACY'S TINY TUBES

THE popular comic strip known to most Americans as "Dick Tracy" introduced sometime before its real appearance, a clever little gadget known as a wrist watch radio. This hypothetical transceiver consisted of a little transmitter and receiver mounted in a case a little larger than a wrist watch! Many thought that it was a good idea and that science should go ahead and invent it. As any science-fiction fan knows, science generally lags his ideas—look at the atomic bomb—and radar—and rockets—and anything you care to name. A science-fiction magazine like *AMAZING STORIES* will suggest a new invention in a story and a few months or a few years later it will be invented!

Well, it looks like Dick Tracy's wrist watch radio is about to be made. It is true that miniature radios are no novelty. But one that small, with a reasonable range hasn't yet been constructed. This is due to two reasons. One, tubes, even the miniature ones, have been too large. Two, batteries have also been too large.

These two faults are in the process of being corrected right now. At the Bureau of Standards in

Washington, scientists have succeeded in building radio receiving and transmitting tubes smaller than a grain of rice! In addition, very tiny batteries have also been built.

The development is a long story. Everyone remembers the early days of radio when tubes were large massive affairs consuming large amounts of power and inefficiently delivering similarly large amounts of useless heat. Gradually radio manufacturers made smaller and smaller tubes with increasingly greater efficiency until now, radios use tubes the size of a human finger which are just as powerful as the older ones the size of the human fist. Of course, the war accelerated the development of minute tubes—particularly for the proximity fuse which was so effective. In the proximity fuse, transceivers were built in a space the size of a demi-tasse.

ANOTHER invention which enables wrist watch radios to be made, is that of the printed circuit. This is simply a matter of printing a radio diagram on a ceramic sheet, using inks made of silver for the wires, inks made of carbon for the

resistors and using alternate sheets of thin mica and silver for the condensers. With the printed circuit a truly miniature set may be made. In fact, if necessary and desired it is possible to print the circuit of the set directly on the glass surface of the tube. This may seem incredible but it works.

Obviously the smaller the radio tube, the less power it is able to handle because such a small tube can only dissipate a modest amount of heat. Thus it would seem that the distance possibilities of such a tube would also be limited. But this does not follow. These sets are designed to work in the higher frequency ranges, in which their practical distance limitations are governed by line of sight.

The minute, grain-size tubes employed in these sets soon to be made are marvels of engineering genius. Remembering, that a filament, a grid, and a plate with their supporting elements must be located within such a small space, makes it hard for us to realize how such a tube can be manufactured. Practically all of the work is done under a microscope. Without that instrument, the wires could hardly be seen. An infinite amount of skill and patience is required to assemble the "grain-tube." Yet it can be done and it

will be done on a large scale because of the demand for the tube.

Those scientists who work on "mechanical brains" are very anxious to use these tubes! An electrical brain may require as many as 20,000 vacuum tubes! In such an employment, the checking of tubes and their general wear become impossibly tedious. Miniature tubes are an ideal replacement. And, of course, they do not occupy one one-thousandth of the space that standard tubes do.

The art of using microtubes is fast becoming of the utmost importance. Whenever—practically—standard tubes are used, microtubes can be used to a greater advantage. This holds true in every respect except that of power-handling capacities. It is apparent that a microtube can't handle anywhere near the amounts of kilowatts that, say, a large transmitting tube can. And so, the microtube will not completely replace the standard tube except for certain applications—above all where small size is desired.

And even in the matter of power, these tubes will provide enough for Dick Tracy to track down another Flat Top!

—Carter T. Wainwright.

THE END

CROCODILE TREASURE

GREED or lust for possession of riches makes man do things which he or others often regret.

One such occasion was a search for the treasures of the Pharaohs of Egypt. Five members of a digging party having no authority to do any archaeological work, accidentally came upon a crocodile cemetery while in their search for riches. In disgust at their findings they decided they must remove these hindrances so that they might continue in further digging. Finding a secluded cave they removed the crocodiles and burned them secretly in this cave every night. The number of crocodiles can be surmised from the fact that this process took the greater part of one year. With this impediment out of the way they continued until they struck the dome of some sort of room of a tomb. Here at last was what they had sought. Entering with the fever of finding gold and jewels they were very much surprised to find a solitary image of a baby crocodile on a pedestal. In frustration they dug further until reaching bed rock. Realizing their efforts were in vain one of the party took the crocodile from its mount and in a fit of violent anger flung it across the room, striking it on the far wall, dashing it to bits. Among the ruins of the idol they found pieces of excellently worked papyrus probably relating the history of some era. No doubt, all of the crocodiles which they had removed and burned contained a like amount of papyrus scrolls, never to be recovered. Archaeologists the world over regretted the folly of what some men will do for material riches.

—Pete Bogg.

HE LOST TO LIVE

ALTHOUGH Archimedes was a resourceful mathematician, he is long remembered for his inventions used in the defense of his beloved Greece. This cunning inventor was once the despair of many Roman conquerors. One such event was the siege of Syracuse.

Marcellus, an ambitious Roman conqueror, had gathered all his forces for the important battle and was meeting with little and ineffectual resistance. All went well until he reached the city of Syracuse proper. There, behind the gates of the city, the Greeks thwarted attempt after attempt of Marcellus and each time with a different device. Marcellus stormed and raged in his camp on the outskirts of the city when each vain effort and its disastrous results were relayed to him.

Finally, at wit's end in trying to compete with the "Curse of Syracuse," as he called Archimedes, he decided to give up the idea of taking the city by violence and proceeded to starve the inhabitants. Archimedes could not compete with this and the city fell soon after.

Normally, anyone who would dare to thwart the tactics of a Roman general was certain to meet death when captured, but Marcellus took such respect to the work of Archimedes that he ordered the life of the Greek wizard spared, perhaps with an eye on his value in further campaigns. However, his orders were not heeded and jealous Roman assistants killed Archimedes a short time later. When news was brought to Marcellus it was said he mourned the mathematician as much as he would the death of his most valiant commander in a crushing defeat.

—R. Dee.

DOOM GLOBE

by S. M. Tenneshaw





He stood facing them, a confident smile on his face and the weapon pointed straight at them . . .

Space pirates had picked out the pleasure ship, *Golden Satellite*, as an easy mark, and it was except for one thing they forgot about . . .

"**T**HAT darned pirate's driving me to ruin!" John Harlin fairly thundered. "This the third money ship disappearance in a month! I've already lost nearly a quarter of a million dollars!"

"But dad, who can he be?" demanded Pat Harlin, her pretty face set in a frown. "You haven't any enemies, except possibly Dirk Riegel, and he's only a business competitor."

"I wish I knew," John Harlin groaned and looked helplessly over his desk at Kent Clark. "What do you think?" he asked.

Kent Clark shrugged and pulled thoughtfully at a cigarette. "I'd give a lot to know what's behind all this myself. One thing is certain, though, the person who's pulling these jobs is no amateur. He's too shrewd."

"Darn right he's shrewd!" Harlin snapped. He rose from his chair and walked over to a porthole. He stared out, chewing bleakly at a dead cigar. Earth, more than two hundred miles below the great pleasure-globe was an immense convexity veiled in clouds.

There was silence in the office. Silence also from the dance hall and gaming rooms outside. For this wasn't the time of day that the night life crowds from Earth came to celebrate at the pleasure-globes. John Harlin's *Golden Satellite* was enjoying a few hours of rest.

Kent Clark pulled on his cigarette, his lean face frowning. Ship detective, and trouble-shooter in general, he was baffled by the repeated attacks on the *Golden Satellite's* money ships, the vessels that traveled to Earth once each

week with the accounted money. It was Kent Clark's job to do something about these piracies.

John Harlin turned away from the porthole. He faced Clark.

"Kent, you've got to find some way to stop this business." He thrust his hands in his pockets. "I'm tied hand and foot. I can't appeal to the Earth-guard fleet for protection, naturally. The publicity would scare our customers away. But if that damned pirate isn't caught I'll be run out of business!" He tore the dead cigar from his teeth and ground it under foot. "Then Riegel will have one less competitor."

Kent Clark reflected grimly. It was all true, what Harlin said. If these robberies kept occurring, the *Golden Satellite* would cease to be. And then Dirk Riegel, the one thorn in John Harlin's side, would have a clear field with his *Blue Comet* pleasure globe. The two were neck and neck competitors for the night life trade of Earth. Only Harlin's gaming rooms were run honestly.

"But, Dad!" Pat Harlin protested. "Kent isn't a one-man army! Do you expect him to go after these pirates single-handed?"

John Harlin strode up to the indignant girl and grinned.

"So that's the way it is, eh? Well, I haven't any objections off hand. Kent may not be a one-man army but his brains should be of some use. After all, I'm paying him a salary almost big enough to support an army!" He turned to the younger man.

"You know how I stand in this matter, don't you? My hands are tied by the fear of scandal."

Clark nodded soberly and snuffed out his cigarette. He stood up. "I understand. When does the next ship leave for Earth with this week's bankroll?"

"In two days," Harlin answered. "And this one better get there."

Clark left the room, sunk deep in thought. Someway, somehow, he'd have to get the money safely through. Fighting would be impossible for there would be only he and the pilot in the ship's tiny control room, and it was fairly certain that the pirates would be overly equipped with guns. He had to think of something that would catch them off guard. Some sort of trap. Suddenly his eyes lighted.

Smiling grimly, Kent Clark strode off down the corridor toward the supply rooms.

BY THE time the express ship was ready to leave for Earth with the *Golden Satellite's* weekly bankroll, Clark had finished his mysterious alterations of the control room. He explained to John Harlin and Pat.

"On each side of the control room door I've set up a row of paralysis beams. They're controlled by a button in the floor. I'll be standing on that button when the pirates enter. When they cross those beams we'll have them."

"By heaven, it might work at that!" John Harlin rubbed his jaw.

"Kent, please be careful . . ." Pat looked anxiously up at him.

Clark stooped slightly and kissed her words away. "Of course I'll be careful," he said smiling. Then he gripped John Harlin's hand and strode into the ship. He seated himself beside Hank Kraft, the tiny ship's pilot. The ship began to move on its conveyor into the airlock. The rear door clanged shut and suddenly they were hurtling into space.

Clark peered tensely into the forward viewplate. Somewhere out there pirates were lurking, waiting. Clark watched.

Minutes ticked away with infinite slowness. The miles reeled off. Clark was beginning to relax. It looked like they would finally get through.

He switched on the radio set and contacted the *Golden Satellite*.

"Everything's alright so far. No sign of anything," he said.

"Good!" Harlin replied. "But keep your eyes peeled."

"I think—" Clark began. But then suddenly he stiffened. A flash of silver shot across their bow. It was a long tapering ship, muzzles of deadly weapons protruding ominously from its sides.

"Oh oh!" Hank Kraft muttered. "They're here!"

"Stop the ship," Clark ordered, as a warning shot slid over their stern.

Kraft stopped the ship, leaning on the underjets to keep them stationary. There was a clang as the silver ship grappled. Then came a pounding at the airlocks. Clark sighed.

"Open them."

They opened. Clark heard the hiss of escaping air. Then he and the pilot stood up and waited. They didn't have to wait long.

A half dozen figures clumped into the control room and Clark tensed his foot against the paralysis button. They were walking right into the trap.

And then—

"No you don't!" Hank Kraft shoved a gun into Clark's ribs. For a moment Clark stood stunned, his mind refusing to believe what was happening. Hank Kraft was one of them! No wonder these robberies had been so easy!

And then Clark received another shock. The leader of the pirates removed his helmet and Clark found himself facing a small wizened man with

a sharp hawk nose and beady eyes.

"Riegel!" he exclaimed. "So you're the rat behind this!"

DIRK RIEGEL lit a cigarette. He drew in huge drafts of smoke and blew them ceilingward. Riegel was seldom seen minus a cigarette in his mouth.

"So what!" he taunted. "A big surprise, no doubt?"

Dirk Riegel received a reply. But it came from a source he never expected.

John Harlin's voice blared out from the radio.

"Riegel! You damned pirate! I might have known you were behind these robberies—I've heard everything, enough to put you behind bars for the rest of your life!"

Dirk Riegel's lips curled up furiously. He leapt across the control room and snapped off the set savagely. He turned to Kraft.

"You fool! Why didn't you shut that thing off!"

Kraft's face went white.

"But Chief, I had to keep my eye on this guy here, and everything happened so quick . . ."

"Shut up!" Riegel screeched. "You've done enough already!" He stalked back and forth across the control room puffing furiously at his cigarette. Suddenly he halted and an evil smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

"Boys, I've got it. John Harlin knows we're behind the robberies now, and he'll blab off his trap the first chance he gets. Well, I don't intend to give him a chance! Bring that flat-foot over to our ship with the dough. We're heading for the *Golden Satellite*. Harlin's globe has a little date to keep with the Moon. . . ."

* * *

Clark stood mutely against one corner of the control room watching the *Golden Satellite* loom on the viewplate. Riegel deftly shot the silver ship toward the growing sphere and Clark felt a tightness close about his heart. He was helpless. Helpless to do anything but watch. He watched.

"If you had kept your big nose out of this," Riegel snapped over his shoulder, "things might have been different. But that's the trouble with you trouble-shooters, you're always looking for it."

Clark fumed. "You'll never get away with this!"

"Who's going to stop me?" Riegel threw back. "And once I get your outfit out of the way I'll run this space globe business like it should be run. Those dumb ninnies who come aboard to dance and sip cocktails are suckers for a marked deck and loaded dice. Too bad Harlin had to play the pretty boy all his life."

Clark clamped his teeth together but didn't say anything. He was watching the viewplate. The *Golden Satellite* obscured all else and they were nearly upon it. Riegel turned to his men, covering Clark.

"O.K. Get to the airlocks. I'm going to grapple her in a minute. Work fast and if they try any funny stuff shoot to kill."

The burly pirates nodded and left the room leaving one behind to keep an eye on Clark. Riegel applied side jets and the ship braked around and edged in toward the port airlocks of the space globe. There was a flash of braking rockets and the ship suddenly grappled against the airlock. Clark tensed. If only Harlin had been able to muster some sort of resistance.

"O.K. Move!" Riegel shoved a gun into Clark's side and motioned toward the door. Clark moved.

When they got to the airlock, bed-

lam broke loose. The pirates had forced their way into the globe and were letting with everything they had on the men Harlin had collected.

It was over almost as soon as it started. Harlin ordered his men to surrender, what men there were left. The floor of the corridor was littered with bodies from the brief fierce struggle.

RIEGEL shoved Clark into the corridor and they faced John Harlin. A cruel smile played around Riegel's mouth.

"You asked for it."

Harlin's face was haggard but his eyes flashed fire.

"You murdering rat! You'll pay for this before I'm through!" he clenched his fists. "I should have known you were behind these piracies!"

"But you didn't," Riegel mocked. "And now that you do, something's going to be done about it."

A momentary flash of apprehension entered Harlin's eyes, then it was gone.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I mean," smiled Riegel, placing a cigarette between his lips and lighting it, "that we're all going to take a nice little ride on this joy house—one way if you get what I mean!"

Harlin's face blanched. "You wouldn't dare."

"Oh wouldn't I!" Riegel's features twisted furiously. "I've been waiting a long time for an opportunity like this. You thought you were pretty smart playing up the angelic business and making things hot for me with the Earth Commissions. You thought you'd run me out of business and have me end up behind bars. Well your little ideas didn't pan out. Now it's my turn."

Harlin glanced at Clark. Clark read anger in his gaze. What Harlin said confirmed it.

"You and your bright ideas and pa-

ralysis beams! I might have known something like this would turn up!"

Clark didn't say anything. He couldn't find anything to say. Riegel suddenly swore and Clark looked up. Pat was being led toward them. Hank Kraft and another pirate grasped her arms. Clark saw red.

"Take your filthy hands off her!" he snapped and stepped forward. A proton gun in his stomach stopped him.

"Easy there," Riegel hissed. "Unless you want to die now."

Clark turned savagely upon him.

"Whatever else you do at least have the decency to let her out of this."

Riegel lit another cigarette from the butt of the one he had been smoking.

"One witness is as bad as a hundred," he said. "And one or a hundred—they're dangerous."

Clark tensed his muscles but a sharp jab in his stomach told him he wouldn't have a chance. He relaxed.

Hank Kraft brought the girl up and released her. She sank against her father and looked hopelessly across at Clark. Clark busily eyed the floor.

"Just one big happy family!" Riegel snorted, puffing heavily on his cigarette. "But we're wasting time." He motioned to some of his men. "Tie them up and make sure you do a good job!"

Clark kicked out savagely as two of the pirates grabbed him. But it was useless. In seconds they were trussed tighter than a Martian canal lock. Riegel opened the door of a supply room.

"In with them."

THEY went in sprawling. Riegel looked after them. He pointed to a porthole on the far side of the room.

"You'll be able to watch the fun from here. The Moon will be at perihelion in a half hour and when we start the ball rolling you can watch it grow! We'll stick around long enough to keep

the course set, then we'll leave and watch the show. You can enjoy the grand finale from in here! Pretty neat, don't you think?"

John Harlin proceeded to exercise his extensive though usually dormant collection of stellar profanity. Clark tore at his bonds until his wrists bled. Riegel smiled once more at them and slammed shut the door. Clark heard the bolt shoot home on the other side.

Clark groaned.

"A fine mess. And I'm to blame..."

Pat Harlin endeavored to smile. "Don't take it so hard, Kent. It wasn't your fault. The cards were just stacked against us."

"They're stacked against us alright!" Harlin thundered. "And if we don't do something mighty darned quick they'll never get unstacked."

The huge space globe shuddered suddenly. The shudder grew into a tremble. Then the tremble grew into an even smooth acceleration. They were moving.

Clark swore softly to himself and glanced at the porthole. The stars had changed their positions and the edge of the Moon was gradually working toward them. In a few seconds they would be heading straight for its center. And in less than an hour, unless something happened to prevent it, they would smash against the jagged craters of the Lunar surface...

Clark glanced wildly about the room. Piled about were boxes and cases. Gaming paraphernalia was stacked haphazardly in one corner. Extra chairs, etc. Just to the left was the emergency welding outfit, acetylene and oxygen tanks. And then Clark's heart leapt. Two large panes of glass stood cradled against a packing case across the room. And as he glanced about the room an idea began to take shape in his mind.

Clark knew he had to reach that glass

somehow and cut his wrists loose. He bunched his legs beneath him and began to push himself across the floor.

"What the hell do you think you're going to do?" John Harlin swore.

But Clark was too busy to answer. The ropes around his ankles bit deep into him every time he drew up his legs, and the skin rubbed from his wrists behind his back. But he was getting there.

It was a slow tedious task. And when he finally reached the glass panes and began to rub the rope against the sharp edges, something warm and sticky ran down his hands. But he clenched his teeth. And finally his hands fell free. Sweat dripped from Kent Clark's brow as he sank back to the floor. In seconds he had his legs free.

Harlin was muttering as Clark loosed him. But Pat didn't say anything. She rubbed her wrists and looked at Clark. He managed to smile.

"Don't worry, honey, there's still a chance..."

"Chance?" Harlin roared. "What the hell kind of a chance have we got—locked behind a steel door and a bunch of armed pirates on the outside. And to top it off, hurtling full power at the Moon. Chance!"

Kent Clark's lips pulled into a straight line. He pointed across the room.

"Have you forgotten that?"

Harlin looked to where Clark pointed. Suddenly he swore.

"By heaven! The welding kit!"

"Yes," echoed Clark, "the welding kit. Here, help me move those tanks over to the door."

HARLIN jumped to it and together they carried the two gas containers across the room. Clark adjusted the hose of each to an oxy-acetylene torch and pulled a match from his

pocket. There was a flare and a hissing. Then a bright blue flame grew to a tapering point. Clark worked it along the spot of the steel door where the bolt was attached to the outside. The metal glowed dully and then grew white.

Precious minutes passed while Clark applied the torch to the steel. During those minutes the Moon grew until it nearly covered the porthole. But the steel door was no match for the cutting torch. The metal around the bolt fused and parted. The door suddenly swung open.

Clark immediately turned off the torch and pulled the hose off the acetylene tank. Then he turned to Harlin and the girl.

"We've got one chance in a thousand of getting out of this. I've got an idea, but it's pretty slim. I want both of you to stay here until I get back. Don't ask any questions, I haven't got time to answer now. If Riegel and his men are all in the control room I may have a chance."

Harlin sputtered. But Clark wasn't there to hear him. He had taken the acetylene tank and disappeared around a bend in the corridor.

Minutes passed.

Pat Harlin looked anxiously at the porthole of the supply room. The Moon had grown alarmingly during the last few minutes. She could make out a huge crater which they seemed to be heading for. Any second now Riegel and his men would be quitting the globe. Where was Kent? What was he doing? . . . Minutes passed.

And then it happened.

There was a dim muffled explosion from somewhere in the huge interior of the *Golden Satellite*. It shook the floor and echoed dully. Then it was gone.

Pat looked perplexedly at her father. He shrugged.

"I wonder what that young fool's done now!" he growled.

But the girl wasn't listening. Her eyes were glued to the porthole of the supply room.

"Look!" she cried.

John Harlin looked. One second the Moon was rushing up at them to seal their doom, and the next it had vanished. Stars took its place and then the edge of Earth. Their mad flight had miraculously been averted. But how? . . .

Harlin stared as Clark came suddenly into view around the corridor. Pat ran to him with a little sob of joy. He drew an arm about her. His face was grim.

"What happened?" Harlin demanded. "What caused that explosion? Who turned the ship? Riegel . . ."

Clark gestured tiredly.

"Riegel and his crew are dead. I put the ship back toward its orbit."

"But how, man! How?" Harlin's face was a picture of amazement.

"The cylinder of acetylene gave me the idea," Clark explained. "While Riegel and his men were in the control room watching the course, I took the cylinder of acetylene to the central atmospheric controls, removed the nitrogen inlet of the control room and connected the acetylene tank. Acetylene and oxygen form an explosive mixture when combined. You remember Riegel's habit of smoking constantly? Well, he blew up himself and his men."

Harlin's breath wheezed out of his lungs.

"Damn!" was all he could say. Then he smiled and gripped Clark's hand.

"I'm sorry about what I said before," he muttered.

"Forget it," Clark said. "We were all pretty well on edge there for a while. Anyway, we won't have to worry about robberies anymore. Riegel and his rot-

ten crew won't bother anybody for a long time. Unless the devil has trouble too," he smiled.

Pat edged in between Clark and her father.

"And from now on, Dad, you're

going to have to get a new trouble-shooter to work out your problems. Because from now on the only trouble Kent's going to shoot will be those we have between ourselves. And I don't think there'll be much of that!"

★ ROBOT FACTORIES ★

By CHARLES REOUR

A "ROBOT FACTORY" is not an establishment where "robots" are made! A robot factory is a factory which functions like a robot. It makes things like any other factory, except that it works automatically and does not require human labor! Is this fantasy? Are there such things as robot factories?

A few years ago we might have dismissed such questions with a shake of the head. We might have laughed at the idea of a remote-controlled factory automatically producing things, but not today. Some while ago, such a staid publication as *Fortune* magazine devoted an article to the subject, and it is now important enough for all of us to consider it.

We Americans have developed the art of mass-production to its highest state. The basis of mass-production as distinguished from handicraft, is to make an object, be it a machine or a dinner plate, as simple as possible. Then the parts of this simply designed device are produced in large numbers after which they are assembled. Each part in turn is simplified and broken down into its simplest components so that the least amount of skill and the greatest uniformity is used. As the object is further studied, it is usually possible to reproduce its parts automatically on machines designed for the purpose, and the more machines that are employed, the more items that are produced. After a while it is possible to make the process so continuous that it is simply a matter of feeding raw material into one end of a factory and taking the finished product from the other end with almost no human interference in between.

At present, this robot-like factory is limited to certain items, usually of a simple nature, but as time goes on it is being applied to more and more things. Obviously the goal is to provide a system where everyone can have everything he wants because there will be such an abundance of his desired objects.

Let us consider a type of factory where this truly robot ability is applied. Petroleum product factories are the best examples of this—in fact, the chemical industry as a whole is the ideal robot industry of today. Bit by bit, its techniques are branching out until after a time it will be followed by most industry. To begin with, a gaso-

line cracking plant has no building. The stills, the fractionating towers and the weather-protected motors and gadgets are located in the open. The only building located near the plant is the control room-office.

HOW is it possible for this type of plant to work without human aid? The answer lies in American instrumentation. So many types of remote control instruments have been created by engineers, that the results of any operation may not only be read at a distant panel, but the process itself may be perfectly controlled from the same distance through valves, meters, motors, and other machines.

This is not hypothesis. This is fact. The atomic bomb plants, much of the chemical industry, and more and more parts of the basic manufacturing industries like steel and iron, are all being run from central control panels operated by a few men trained in handling instruments. The application of instruments to other industries is proceeding at a rapid rate.

An excellent example of an industry where automatic machinery is applied on a lavish scale is the light bulb and radio tube manufacturing groups. We consider this example because it is necessary to show that these techniques can be applied to other things than materials which simply flow in the form of liquids and gases.

The bulbs for electric lights and radio tubes are made in an automatic glass-blowing machine which without human aid picks up globules of molten glass, and automatically blows them with the aid of compressed air into water-cooled molds at the rate of tens of thousands per hour! The process goes on at an incredible rate. A few such machines can make all the bulbs that are needed in the United States for a year in a matter of months. In other words such a machine can produce at a rate that humans find impossible. Furthermore, the product is sounder and more uniform than hand-made bulbs. The parts for the bases and the interiors of the lamps or radio tubes at the same time are stamped out on automatic machinery. The only handwork necessary is assembly, and this gradually is being eliminated. It is possible to devise a machine to duplicate almost any human function except thinking!

Where will this lead? It should take us to a period of such abundance as we cannot imagine. As time goes on, this utilization of machines for humans—practically unattended—will make our life a paradise of leisure. The miracles performed by American industry during the war were for a great part due to the application of control to

automatic machinery and the simplification of manufacturing problems by breaking down an object into its simplest components for the easiest sort of reproduction. Everything from a screw to an airplane may eventually be built in a manless completely robotic factory!

THE END



DISCOVERY OF THE GUYOT



By C. N. GEORGE

THE analog of radar, "sonar" is proving itself these days, in peace as well as in war. "Sonar" is the name given to a device very similar to radar in that it ranges and detects distant objects, except that it uses a beam, highly directional, of high frequency sound, far above the audible range. This ultra-sound is generated usually by a vibrating crystal. It exhibits its best effects in relatively dense media—such as water. Radar cannot be used for underwater work in ranging and detecting distant objects, because the electromagnetic waves produced are grounded out or eliminated by the conductive effects of water, fresh or salty.

Sound however travels better in water than in air—if by "better" we mean faster and in a more well-defined path. During the war, both submarines and their hunters on the surface used sonic devices of this nature to detect each other. Recently sonar has been used to track schools of fish to aid in making large catches.

More and more it is being applied to the exploration of the sea-bottom by oceanographers whose desire is for purely scientific knowledge. And its use is adding pages to our understanding of the mysterious depths of the sea. Prior to the use of this agency the only way to explore the sea bottom was to explode charges on it, or to sample it with tools at the ends of cables. Neither method provided much information.

The Central Pacific Ocean, that "mother" of all oceans, that vast expanse of water that Americans learned to know so well, has offered some surprises to the prying eye of sonar. Oceanographers have discovered a chain of leveled-off mountain tops that stretch clear across the Pacific from Hawaii to Guam. These mountain tops are more in the nature of large plains than mountain peaks for they often have areas of hundreds of square miles. Then abruptly they drop off into the depths once more.

The name "guyot" has been applied to this submerged mountain chain and it is suspected that sonar will discover many more of these ranges. What they mean is a moot question. Speculators will immediately be pleased at the discovery of

these guyots because in a way they offer confirmation of the old belief in the buried continents of Mu and Atlantis. Startling as is this confirmation of the discovery, it is still too early to jump to conclusions.

SCIENTISTS have conservatively speculated that indeed these may be sunken continental masses but they throw cold water on the idea that they ever were inhabited. Personally, it is the belief of many that ancient legend is too strong to be denied, and mythology is so full of reference to these mysterious continents that there must be more than rumor to them.

If and when sonar exploration is applied to the Atlantic perhaps similar guyots will be discovered. If so, this will be excellent evidence for the existence of the hypothetical continents. The wonderful thing about the use of sonar is the fact that it may cover such a huge area of the ocean's bottom. Thus a continent as large as Atlantis was reputed to be, will be thoroughly explored.

In a short time, oceanographers are going to have further research tools at their finger tips in the form of actual machines for going down into the oceans' depths and sampling directly, the weird life therein. The Piccards with their underwater gondola, a pair of great American submarine-men and divers, and others, will all come to the aid of the oceanographer with tools that will enable him to really go down and see what things are about.

Perhaps developments in television will proceed to the point where it will be possible to continuously and directly observe the multitude of undersea life that is now known to exist. When it comes to speculating about what else may be discovered the heart grows faint at the thought.

The discovery of the guyot is most encouraging to those who have long believed without adequate foundation, that there is thorough fact in the myths and legends surrounding Mu and Atlantis. Let us hope that this is the case. It would open new worlds to a world which is now astounded at nothing!

THE END

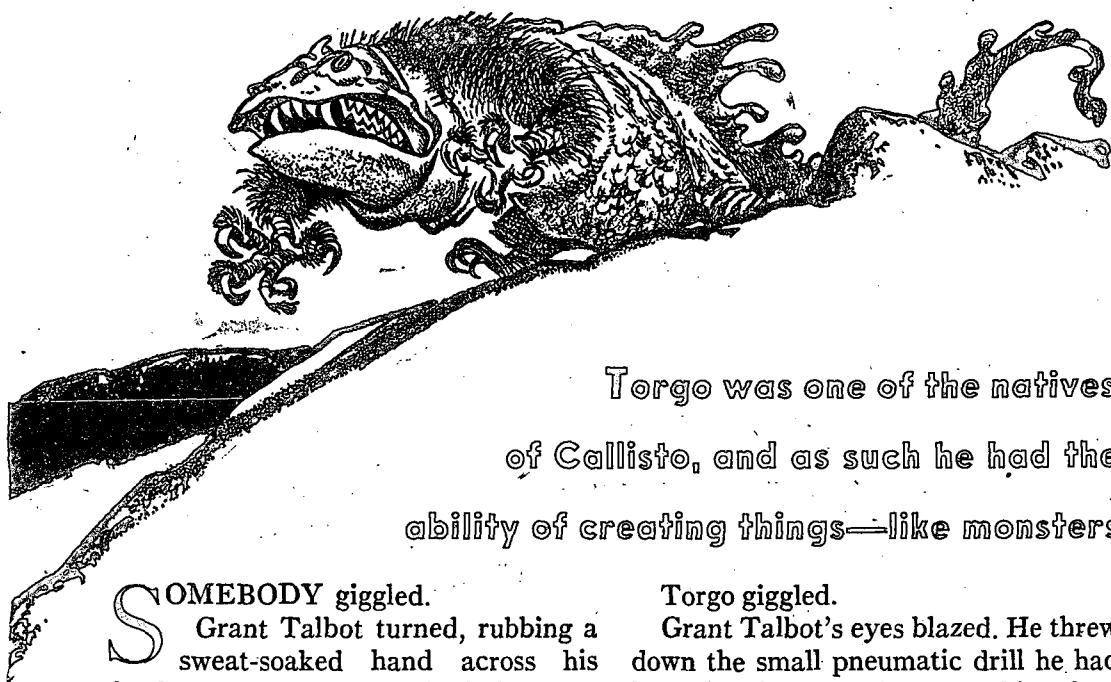
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ILLUSION ON CALLISTO

By WARREN KASTEL



Torgo seemed to be completely unaware of the turmoil. He just stood there tipping the bottle up and ignoring the monster...



Torgo was one of the natives
of Callisto, and as such he had the
ability of creating things—like monsters

SOMEbody giggled.

Grant Talbot turned, rubbing a sweat-soaked hand across his forehead. He stood in the half gloom of the tunnel and stared. Then he swore.

"Well I'll be darned! Torgo! You're drunk! I thought I told you to put that lazy gang of yours to work in the shaft! Instead you raid my liquor cabinet! What do you think I'm running, a Jovian beer hall?"

Torgo giggled.

Grant Talbot's eyes blazed. He threw down the small pneumatic drill he had been repairing as his eyes blazed at Torgo. "It's bad enough that I've got to eke out my existence on this barren space rock with only a slap-happy crew of Jovian Kwangs for company!" he thundered into Torgo's giggling features.

"It's not enough that my mining permit from Earth is about to expire



without hitting paydirt! And that Madge Brady dame roosting on the other side of this solar refuse—working like hell to beat me to the plastite well! But no! On top of this you have to break into my private scotch and get drunk!” Talbot could smell his precious whisky all over the hunched, powerful frame of Torgo. Torgo giggled again.

Angrily Grant Talbot kicked the drill from his path and stormed up the tunnel to his make-shift office. Inwardly he cursed every atom of every Kwang in the Universe. Never in his life had he known a more peculiar race of people. They had the intelligence of a moron—but the strength of twenty men. But that wasn’t the worst of it. The Kwang came from Jupiter, the hell world of the solar system. A place where mathematics refused to work right. A place where the Kwang and their mental illusions* were good company.

Inside the office Talbot threw himself into a chair and groaned. It was a mess, the whole damned setup. A year ago he’d have laughed if anyone told him he would be sweating on Callisto with atomic drills around a plastite well, that highly pliable substance so necessary in the construction of automatic rocket controls. But that was a year ago.

The picture had been different then. Grant Talbot had had a bright future ahead of him as a technical mining engi-

neer. His father, John Talbot, had made great plans for him in the Talbot Mining Projects Inc., a corporation which didn’t exist now.

Cold fury ran through Grant Talbot’s mind as he sat in his office thinking. It had been Steve Brady and his cut-throat outfit who ruined his father’s business, jumping his claims, waylaying his supply ships, and hiring pirates to wreck the Talbot mines. It happened so fast no one had time to think. One day John Talbot had called him in his office on Earth.

“GRANT,” he said, “I’m ruined. I haven’t a thing to go on. My customers have all deserted me—thanks to Steve Brady and his space rats. What little business I have left isn’t enough to cover operating expenses. I’ve just filed bankruptcy.”

The words had hit Grant Talbot hard. He looked at his father, sitting there, grown old in weeks. All of the fire that had made him tops in the mining field, was gone. He was a shell. Empty inside.

“There’s one thing Brady and his band didn’t get though,” the old man continued. “A few months back I put a claim on Callisto in your name. No one but you knows of it now. I think there’s a rich plastite well on Callisto. It’s yours, Grant. But watch out for Brady. If he finds out about that claim he’ll stop at nothing to get it. You’ve

**Jupiter is a world of phenomenal monsters. The Kwang, nearest thing to human form on Jupiter, live in constant fear of their existence because of the roving killers on their world. Because of this, nature has provided them with a means of defense. Their highly unintelligent minds possess the phenomenal ability to create “illusions.” When a Kwang is attacked by one of the monsters on his home world, he becomes so*

hysterical in his fear that he creates a mental monster. This nonexistent creature actually appears to live and breathe. When the real Jovian creature sees this illusion as one of its own kind about to attack, it retreats. The Kwang then has time to gain safety. This ability of the Jovian Kwang to create seemingly real “illusions” is comparable to the human “mirage.” Only much more effective—Ed.

got to pick up where I leave off, Grant. It's your job from now on."

The next day John Talbot was found dead. His health broken, he had committed suicide. And Grant Talbot couldn't forget that Steve Brady had caused all this to happen.

The next thing Grant Talbot knew he was on Jupiter. He had to have a crew to work his mine. Jovian Kwangs worked hard and cheaply. It was then he found Torgo. A smile crossed Talbot's face as he recalled that night in the Jovian beer hall. He was sitting at a table with one of his father's friends, a roving miner, discussing his plans, when in walked a Kwang, as drunk as ever a Kwang could be. The miner nudged Talbot.

"Want to have a little fun?" he asked. Grant Talbot didn't know exactly what kind of fun the miner had in mind. But he soon found out.

The miner suddenly cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted: "Hi! Look out! A Swaxzi!"

Talbot knew that a Swaxzi was a dread Jovian monster. He had heard tales of the Kwang's ability to create an equally dreadful monster as self-protection. But he had never seen one. Few people had. The Swaxzi were to the Kwang what the bogey-man is to an Earthman. But with the Kwang it was different.

When the miner yelled out, the Kwang wheeled about drunkenly, his slit eyes now wide with fear. It was apparent that he was visualizing one of the dread creatures that periled his race. For a few seconds the Kwang glanced wildly about him. Then he let out a screech of terror. One of his taloned hands pawed the air before him. And Talbot suddenly grew tense.

Out of the air in the beer hall there materialized a thing. It was hideous, monstrous, an utterly damnable thing.

It was as huge as a locomotive and about as meek. It pawed the floor with hoofs that set the rafters to shaking, and suddenly charged.

As Grant Talbot thought of it now it seemed ridiculous. But it hadn't seemed so at the time. Uttering a sharp cry of warning, he flung the first thing he could lay his hands on, a half empty bottle, at the Swaxzi. The bottle passed right through it, hitting instead, with a resounding whack, the Kwang's head. The Kwang folded like a wet rag. The Swaxzi vanished instantly.

Talbot had vowed he'd never have anything to do with a crazy Kwang. He didn't like the idea of seeing monsters coming out of thin air at him. Real or not. It was bad on the nerves.

BUT the Kwang that Talbot hit with the bottle thought differently. When he came around he looked dazedly about him. He spied Talbot and the miner sitting at a table watching him. Staggering forward he grabbed Talbot's arm, pumping it vigorously. Then Talbot caught on. The Kwang thought he had saved him from one of the monsters! Ever since, Torgo, as Talbot later found out was his name, remained his constant companion. But at the present moment Talbot could have kicked him back to Jupiter.

He was so near the well, he knew. The rock was turning crumbly at the bottom of the shaft. And now, with only a few days remaining on his permit, his crew of Kwangs, Torgo included, had to go and get drunk! Talbot groaned. For he knew that on the other side of Callisto, Madge Brady, Steve Brady's niece, was superintending a shaft that would beat him to the plastite.

"By Heaven, I won't give in without a fight!" Grant Talbot smashed his fist on the desk. "I'll make those damned

Kwang work!" He started for the door, pausing to strap on his proton holster. As he did so his eyes fell on the liquor cabinet in the corner. It was closed.

Frowning, Grant Talbot strode over to it. He glanced at the lock. "Something's wrong here!" he muttered. The lock was intact. The cabinet was securely fastened. Hastily he opened the door. The bottles of liquor hadn't been touched!

The frown on Grant Talbot's forehead deepened. But how could that be? The cabinet was locked, the liquor safe—and yet Torgo and the crew were drunk!

Angrily, Talbot slammed from the room and strode off down the tunnel. There was something queer about this.

At the end of the tunnel, in the broad domed chamber where the work should have been going on, Talbot saw Kwangs lying haphazardly about, snoring contentedly. Torgo alone was on his feet, wobbling in circles, a bottle clutched possessively in one taloned hand. He was giggling. Talbot stamped up to him.

"Torgo!" he bellowed. "Where did you get that bottle?"

Torgo cocked a bloodshot eye askance and giggled some more.

"Answer me!" Talbot shouted, smashing the bottle from Torgo's grip. "Who the hell's been passing liquor out around here?"

But Torgo only giggled.

Then a voice cut in from behind Talbot.

"That's exactly what I want to know!"

Talbot spun and found himself facing the slim figure of a girl. "Madge Brady!" he blurted out. She stood at the entrance to the mining chamber, pausing lightly, her head thrown back angrily, copper spun curls falling around her shoulders. An ugly proton

gun thrust forward in her hand. Talbot's face turned red with anger.

"What do you want? Can't you see I've got enough trouble?" He made a grab for the gun at his side.

"Not so fast there," warned the girl icily. "I wouldn't like to have to use this."

Grant Talbot smiled coldly. "No. I guess you wouldn't at that. A knife in the back is more to a Brady's liking!"

The girl's face darkened. "That's a lie!" she said. "A real Brady never hurt anyone." For a moment a strange mixture of emotions played across her features, then they passed. Talbot frowned. The words somehow didn't satisfy him.

"And now tell me what the big joke is!" There was menace in the girl's voice.

"Joke!" Talbot coughed out the word. A thought suddenly struck him. It was this beautiful hell-cat who had given his crew that liquor! That was it! She wanted to make sure he didn't strike the plastite well before his permit expired!

"You've got a nerve!" he exclaimed. "Coming around here to see how your dirty work panned out!"

THE girl laughed drily. "My dirty work! Well, that's one I never thought you'd try to pull!" She glanced around at the Kwang crew, slumbering peacefully, bottles strewn around them, and at Torgo standing off to one side viewing the scene, rocking slightly on his feet and giggling. "You do quite a neat job of coverup too, I see," she added.

Talbot clenched his fists. This was going too far.

"Say, what in blazes are you talking about?" he demanded hotly.

"Just this," the girl retorted. "I want to know why you smuggled liquor

into my crew's quarters! I suppose you thought you'd stop me by getting my crew drunk—and then covering up by having your outfit put on an act for my benefit!"

"Your crew—me—act—" Talbot looked as if he would swallow his tongue. His face got purple. And then, suddenly, as Talbot looked into the blazing eyes of Madge Brady, he paused. By the seven Gods of Mars! —*She meant what she said!*

"You mean to stand there and tell me," Talbot managed to blurt out, his anger swiftly turning to amazement, "that your crew is laid out—like mine?"

"That's exactly what I mean to say!" she responded. "And I'm here to see that you pay for it!"

Grant Talbot's brain raced. There was something queer about this. Something he didn't understand at all. In the first place, it was queer that this girl should be operating a mine at all. Why didn't Steve Brady put some of his men on the job? And then his crew suddenly gets drunk on smuggled liquor. It hadn't come from his cabinet, he knew. It had to come from Madge Brady! But here she stood, accusing him of the identical thing he thought she was doing!

"Look," Talbot began, as the girl advanced into the chamber. "Somebody placed a load of liquor where my crew could get at it, figuring that they'd get too drunk to work. They did. Now you come along and say the same thing's happened to you! Either one of us is a damn liar or somebody's crossing us up!"

The girl gazed into Grant Talbot's steely blue eyes. Her determination faded as she saw the earnestness there. She suddenly realized that he meant what he said!

"But that doesn't make sense!" she

stammered uncertainly. "If you didn't fix my crew, and I didn't fix yours, then who did?"

There was an abrupt scraping of feet from behind them. A voice rasped.

"I did."

Talbot and the girl spun around. They stood staring at a group of men who suddenly materialized in the mine entrance with leveled guns. Especially did they stare at the leader, a tall, blocky man with deep-set eyes and a curling lower lip. Talbot whispered hoarsely.

"So it's you—Steve Brady!"

"Yes it's me, Steve Brady." He shoved forward menacingly. "You can drop that toy you're carrying, young woman!"

Madge Brady bit her lip. She dropped the gun.

"That's better," Steve Brady said, peering at them closely. "And now we can get down to business."

Grant Talbot glared at the man who had caused his father's ruin. He looked at the girl standing beside him. Vainly trying to figure it out. But it was too mixed up. One thing however, was sure. Madge Brady was fighting her Uncle, and that automatically put her on his side. The knowledge quickened his pulse.

"You almost got away with your little plan, my dear," Steve Brady addressed the girl. "But luckily I found out about it in time."

"You ought to congratulate yourself!" the girl said heatedly. "Your methods are about as rotten as your decency!"

STEVE BRADY smiled. His lips curled back and he laughed. "You'll lose some of that bravado before I'm through with you!" he said. Then his mouth settled back into a leer. "We'll soon see how efficient my methods are!"

Talbot unconsciously moved closer to the girl. There was menace in every word Steve Brady uttered. A cold fury swept over him. Here was the man who had ruined his father—and caused his death. Here was the man he had sworn to get. His fingers longed to curl around that fat throat and squeeze—make him suffer as his father had suffered.

"Brady," Grant Talbot spoke slowly. "I've been waiting a long time to catch up with you. I swore I'd get you for what happened to my father. I will."

"You, my good fellow," Brady replied acidly, "are not going to get anybody. I'll admit I didn't quite plan it this way, but my niece decided things for me."

Talbot frowned, looking at the girl.

Steve Brady nodded. "This young lady here thought she would double-cross me. But I've been suspicious of her for some time. She doesn't like the way I conduct my business. Quite the little saint!"

Madge Brady flushed and turned away from Talbot. Steve Brady continued:

"Unfortunately I didn't know about this claim when your father's business underwent, er—bankruptcy. If I had known about it, this would never have happened. When you began to work it I first decided to let you waste your time, but then my assayers informed me that there *was* a well on Callisto and I decided to step in.

"Ordinarily I would have taken possession of your claim," he smiled at the fury in Grant Talbot's eyes. "But my niece here sold me on an idea. She staked a claim on the other side of Callisto, and was to beat you striking the plastite. If you didn't strike before your claim expired, she'd get it anyway. In either case, you would have lost. But then she tried to trip me up.

"I found out just in time that she had secretly signed her claim over to you, so that if yours didn't come in, when hers did, you'd get it! Quite dramatic, eh? Helping the trodden hero back on his feet after the cruel villain has floored him! That's where I stepped in. Doing away with your crews at the expense of a little liquor saved me a struggle."

Talbot had ceased to listen. He was staring at the girl. And suddenly his heart beat faster. So that was why she was working that claim! And all along he had thought she was acting under her Uncle's orders! The girl's features turned crimson as she felt Grant Talbot's gaze burn down upon her. Then she threw back her head defiantly and faced Brady and his men.

"So now that you've spilled my little secret," she said, "what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to do plenty about it," Steve Brady assured her. "You've become quite annoying to me with your exalted ideals, and lately, dangerous. Dangerous people don't stand in my way."

Talbot felt his blood chill. So that was Brady's plan. To kill them and take over the mine. He could understand his own death warrant—but the girl! With a curse he rushed for the fat throat of Steve Brady.

A PROTON gun was shoved into his stomach. Steve Brady gritted:

"No heroics, Talbot, unless you want to die right now!" The proton gun shoved harder. Talbot relaxed. He knew that Brady wouldn't hesitate to use that gun. Maybe. . . . A steely glint leapt into his eyes.

Somebody giggled.

Talbot turned and saw Torgo rocking lightly on his feet. Somewhere he had got hold of another bottle, and he

was eyeing them foolishly. Steve Brady swore.

"Shut up, you crazy idiot!" he roared. "Get over there with the rest of your drunken lot!"

Torgo ambled off, giggling softly. Talbot followed him with his eyes.

"And now we'll finish our business." The menace had returned in Brady's voice. Beside him, Talbot felt the girl's body quiver.

"Listen, Brady," Talbot pleaded. "Whatever you do with me, leave Madge out of it!" He suddenly realized he had used her first name. He passed a quick glance at her and was glad.

"Don't worry about me," the girl said evenly. "I'm not afraid of him!"

Steve Brady smiled as he motioned to his men.

"There's going to be a little accident around here soon, I'm afraid. And unfortunately you two are going to play a major part in it. I've wasted too much time as it is."

He signalled to his men and they shoved Talbot and the girl back to the far side of the chamber beside one of the huge atomic drills. Steve Brady moved over to the drill controls.

The fate in store for them burst upon Grant Talbot. Brady was going to turn the huge smashing force of the drill upon them—they'd be riddled to pieces against the rocky wall! Brady read Grant Talbot's thoughts.

"An ingenious method if I do say so. It leaves little or no trace of identification, and gives the appearance of an accident." He smiled grimly. The girl's face turned white and she bit her lip to keep it from trembling. Talbot turned and unconsciously slipped his arm about her shoulders.

The drill was being brought to bear upon them. Brady's men struggled with its weight. At a flick of the fin-

ger, Steve Brady would seal their doom and finish the job he had started when he ruined John Talbot. The huge bit of the drill loomed. With a final shove the tool was placed directly upon them. Steve Brady stepped back beside it and his men drew away.

Grant Talbot drew in his breath sharply. It was now or never. His eyes gleamed with the hope of a drowning man sighting a ship. Brady's hand was reaching for the switch.

Talbot suddenly threw his arm forward and shouted crazily at the top of his lungs.

"Torgo—Torgo lookout behind you—a Swaxzil!"

For a split second silence reigned. Then suddenly, Torgo, his features wide with fear spun toward the mine tunnel. His drunken features were convulsed with the same fear Talbot had seen that time in the Jovian saloon. One of the Kwang's taloned hands pawed the air in terror and then he let out a screech of fear. Talbot had his heart in his mouth. It had to work—

And then it happened.

OUT of thin air materialized a ferocious, hideous creature. It was the same monster Talbot had seen on Jupiter. It was huge. It was so huge it blocked the entire mine chamber. It resembled a cross between a dinosaur and a roaring dragon. Fire spouted from its nostrils and it pawed the rocky floor of the cavern with a hoof that shook the very walls. The girl fainted in Talbot's arms.

Steve Brady and his men let out one screech of terror. Then they ran. But they didn't have anyplace to run. They cowered back toward the edge of the mine shaft. And then Torgo started running across the chamber. Behind him the monster mirage charged.

Talbot acted quickly. As Torgo flew

by him, seeking escape, he reached out and grabbed him. Torgo squealed in terror, but Talbot hung on and yanked him behind the drill. He was just in time. The creature, charging with the force of an express rocket, rushed by straight for Brady and his men. Talbot saw instantly what was about to happen. He turned away.

Steve Brady let out a screech of fear as the Swaxzi thundered down toward him. His men and he didn't realize it was only an illusion created by Torgo's fear-distorted mind. Unseeing, they stumbled to the edge of the mine shaft. They fell screaming. The Swaxzi rushed by and vanished into the solid rock of the wall beyond. There was a long lingering series of shrieks and then a number of dull thuds . . .

Talbot put the girl gently on the cot in his office. He moved over to the cabinet and poured out a glass of brandy. He forced it into the girl's mouth. She opened her eyes.

For a moment stark terror was in her gaze, but Talbot smiled reassuringly.

"It's all over. There's nothing to be afraid of now."

"That—that horrible creature!"

Talbot nodded grimly and told her what had happened. She had heard of the strange power of the Kwangs, but had never believed it possible. She closed her eyes when Talbot told her what happened to Brady and his men.

"It was a terrible thing to do, I know," he said softly, "but it was the

only thing I could do. I wasn't even sure myself it would work. But I had to take the chance."

The girl managed a smile. At this moment Torgo lumbered into the room, very sober. There was a look of elation on his face. He had been victorious over the Swaxzi twice now! He was feeling jubilant and beamed happily upon Talbot and the girl.

Talbot turned to Marge Brady, ignoring Torgo. His face flushed slightly.

"I was just thinking, Madge, I owe you an apology. I thought—"

"No you don't," she countered. "I'm the one who's to blame for leading you to believe what you did."

Talbot smiled. "At any rate, now we can merge our claims and take our time with the plastite well. And when we do strike it," he lowered his voice. "Do you recall saying something about a *real* Brady? Well, I'd like to know a real one. Of course, it might take me a lifetime—but we could rebuild the Talbot Mining Projects Inc. together—as life-partners."

The girl raised tear-flecked eyes. That was answer enough for him. He took her in his arms.

Behind them, unobserved, Torgo was raiding the liquor cabinet. He smiled to himself as he turned his attention to the contents of a large bottle. Behind him, Torgo heard a low smack. But Torgo wasn't interested. He could drink all he wanted now, and to heck with the Swaxzi!

FOR WOMEN ONLY

MAN has generally dominated the culture, mythology and history of the nations of the world with each passing age. However, there are few instances in which the women have been the principal actors.

In Roman mythology such an occasion is celebrated in honor of the goddess of fertility, Bona Dea, meaning the goddess of good. She was, at various times, reputed to be the wife, sister and daughter of Faunus. From earliest times she had

been worshipped in secrecy, but only by women. Her name was even kept from the ears of the men.

The festival of Bona Dea was observed on May 1 and was generally attended by the higher vestal virgins. Although her sanctuary was atop the Mount Aventinus the celebration was carried out in the consul building of Rome. Needless to say, all men were not permitted presence, let alone take part in the ceremonies, and even the portraits of the males in the ceremonial halls were veiled.

The SECONDARY HEART



By FRANCES YERXA



THE Lindbergh-Carrel mechanical heart is familiar to most of us. This is a device for keeping alive an ordinarily dead piece of tissue, usually a portion of a chicken's heart. This mechanical heart is a rather complex machine of glass and rubber tubing with special attachments that remove waste products secreted by the organ and supply the necessary oxygen and food products. It is a marvel of the surgeon-mechanic's art but its use is strictly in the laboratory. As yet it has not been applied to human tissue.

Recently, an announcement has been made from the Army Medical Laboratory in Washington, D.C., by Dr. Draper, a prominent physiologist. He has published a paper describing a most unique discovery. He has found that there exists in the human body a mysterious pumping agency that has the property of circulating the blood long after all apparent physiological and mechanical heart action has ceased! The greatest amount of the research has been done with animals, particularly dogs, but it looks as if it has promising possibilities with humans also.

Ordinarily, when the heart stops beating, this occurs; the mysterious and unknown "pump" that exists in the body, continues to circulate the blood throughout the body. It delivers the blood, laden with oxygen, to the tissues within the body, which need it. Then it returns the corpuscles to the lungs to give up the carbon dioxide they have accumulated, and to take on a fresh supply of oxygen. This continues for four or five minutes after the heart action has ceased. Because ordinary air is four-fifths nitrogen, the corpuscles at that time are then unable to pick up any more oxygen because no breathing action is expelling this nitrogen from the lungs, and no pumping action of normal respiration is taking in more air. Consequently, even the internal unknown pump ceases to operate and the body dies.

Dr. Draper found that by supplying the lungs with pure oxygen, this pumping action keeps up for as long as an hour or more, even though no actual respiration is occurring! This astounding discovery makes it apparent that to keep a body alive in which all respiratory activity has ceased, it is simply necessary to force pure oxygen into the lungs. While the experiments on humans have not progressed to any extent, on dogs, it has worked remarkably well.

You might ask, "but what about the carbon dioxide saturation of the lungs after a time?" True, carbon dioxide does accumulate in the lungs and the oxygen does not wash it away, but for some

unknown reason it does not cause death.

THE potentialities, of this discovery are great. One of the chief difficulties in giving various anesthetics, is the fact that anesthesia often paralyzes the respiratory muscles, with the consequent death of the patient by asphyxiation. By flooding the lungs of the anesthetized person with pure oxygen, the unknown pumping action should occur, and the result will be that the person will continue to breathe without any muscular activity. This is a boon medicine has been awaiting for a long time.

As in most discoveries of this sort, there is a catch. It has been found, that dogs exposed to this treatment for any time, lose all signs of mental activity, for periods ranging from hours to weeks. Their brains simply cease to function. They lose all ability to think at all. It is as if they were in a state of suspended animation! This is true suspended animation for the encephalograph cannot detect the slightest amount of electrical activity within the brain, indicating that no thinking is going on. What the consequences would be with humans is still to be found, but it should be noted that this is only a temporary condition, and the animals who underwent this cataleptic state proved later to recover all their faculties and acted in a normal fashion after a variable time.

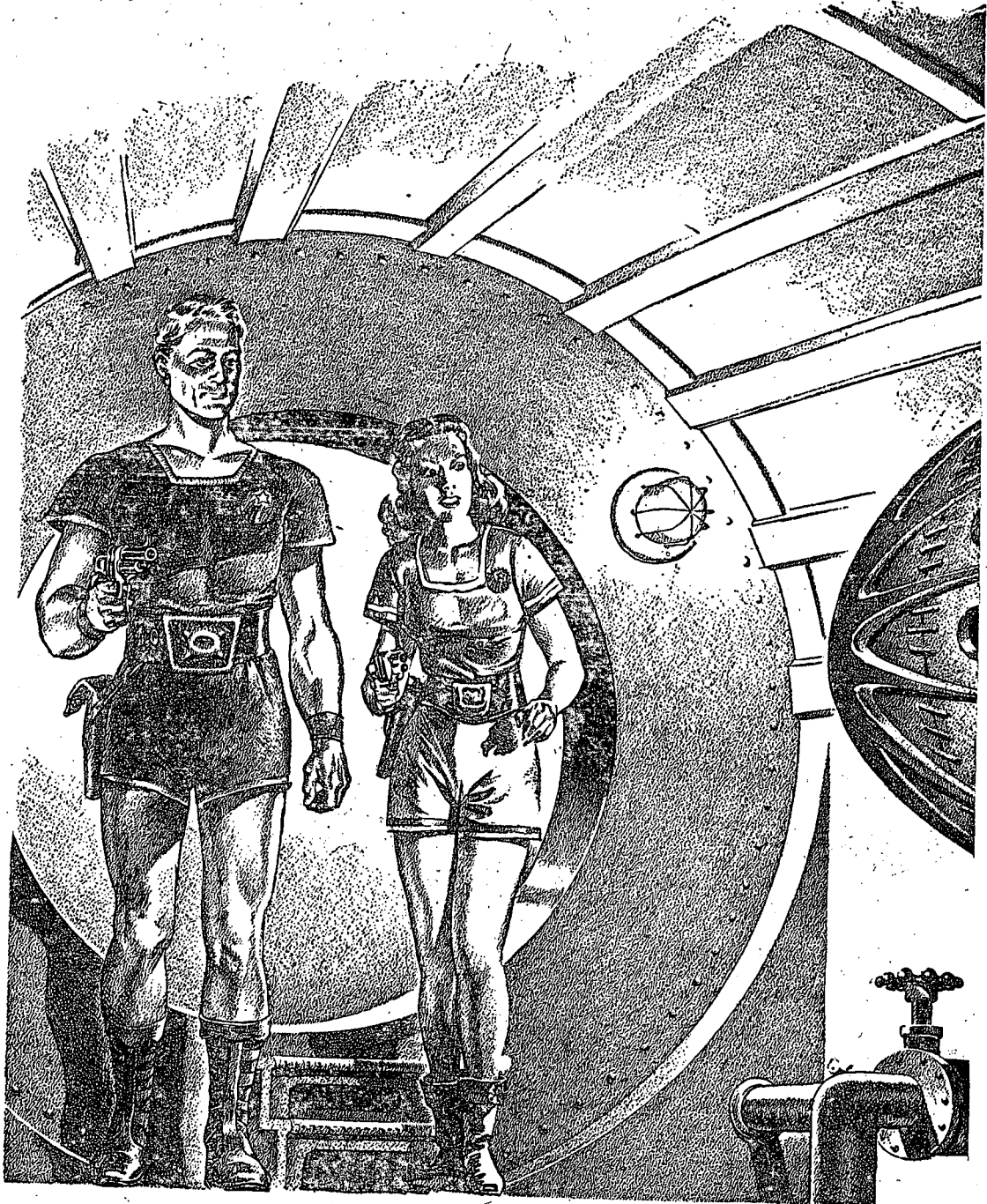
Whether this technique will be applied to humans is of course unknown, but it offers great possibilities. Like all scientists, Dr. Draper makes it clear that so far the work is purely in the laboratory stage, that it has been applied only to animals, and that there is no assurance that it would work in the same way on humans. But, from what we know of the physiological and mental nature of the animals under treatment, it is a safe bet to conclude that it will certainly be applied to men eventually.

This discovery of Dr. Draper's brings to mind, the famous controlled experiments with dogs, performed some years back by Russian scientists. No further statements have been announced ever by them but it is again safe to say that a great deal has been learned. Often it is difficult to see the immediate end of an experiment. Often it appears as if there is no relation between the experiment and human needs. Usually this turns out to be a wrong conclusion. It is the purely theoretical that has the most profound value in the long run. This applies to medicine as truly as it does to something as tangible as applied engineering.

THE END

JUSTICE SATELLITE

By GUY ARCHETTE



Tom Avery and Buttons Doane had to go all the way to Ganymede to get justice in this rebellion . . .



"I wouldn't, if I were you," said Avery

"HEY—what do you think you're doing? Let me go!"

The startled voice pierced abruptly into the frigid silence of the Martian night. It made Senior Pilot Tom Avery reach for the vibro-ray pistol holstered at his belt and flatten in the shadows of a warehouse. For a moment he remained motionless, muscles gathered tautly, narrowed eyes probing the gloomy street in the direction from which the voice had come. Vaguely, in the dim light of wide-spaced street lamps, he was able to make out the struggling figures of a number of men ahead.

Tom Avery moved his shoulders in a weary shrug. It was nothing that concerned him. He knew that brawls, in this rough and ready space port district, were a frequent occurrence—all too frequently now that troubled times had settled on Mars.

In spite of his shrug, Tom Avery remained uneasy. There had seemed to be something familiar about that voice he had heard. He wondered if it could have belonged to one of the men on the *Dwarf Star*. He knew that several, like himself, were abroad tonight on a special mission.

"Help!"

It was the voice again, gasping, desperate.

"Tom—help!"

Avery whispered an oath. That last cry had been for him! And now he recognized the voice. It was that of Buttons Doane, his co-pilot on the *Dwarf Star*.

Avery sprang forward unhesitatingly, pulling the vibro-ray pistol from his belt. He raced toward the fight, grimly glad that Fate had directed him along the same street that Buttons Doane had taken. The youthful little co-pilot had guts, but he was hardly a match for a gang of thugs.

It was characteristic of the man who called himself Tom Avery that he didn't pause to learn the number of Buttons Doane's attackers. Buttons was his friend. Whatever the odds he was shortly to face, only that one fact alone was important.

As silent as the descent of death itself, Avery hurtled into the midst of the struggling figures. His arrival came as a complete surprise. Before the others were fully aware of his presence, he had cleared a semi-circle before him with the clubbed barrel of his pistol. He didn't dare to shoot. Somewhere in that tangle of writhing bodies was Buttons Doane. Avery couldn't take the risk of hitting the little co-pilot.

From somewhere on the fringe of the battle a curiously soft voice spoke commandingly. "Spread out, you fools! Spread out! There's just one. Surround him."

Those of the group remaining separated almost instantly in the gloom. Tom Avery had moved at the same time. He crouched now with his back to the wall of a building, the vibro-ray pistol held alertly in his hand. He searched for Buttons Doane even as he watched the dim figures begin closing in on him.

Several bodies lay sprawled in the shadows of the street. Buttons might have been one of them, but Avery couldn't be sure. There was no time to find out.

THERE was an abrupt flash of light in the half-dark as a flame gun emitted its searing charge. Avery darted aside, firing as he moved. A shrill yell rose as the vibro-ray touched flesh and turned instantly to heat.

"No shooting!" the curiously soft voice commanded again. "Take him alive. We can use him."

The muscles of Avery's face tightened grimly. He knew suddenly what this was all about. These men were not mere criminals roaming the narrow, ill-lighted streets of the space port district of Thanokis in quest of unwary victims to rob. They were the members of a press-gang! It was human rather than monetary loot that they were after.

The knowledge that he was fighting a press-gang came as no huge surprise to Tom Avery. It just explained several things.

It explained, for example, the recent, mysterious disappearances of spacehands from Earth-based vessels. It explained why nearly a fourth of the crew of the *Dwarf Star* had failed to report for duty at the time the ship was to leave Thanokis for its return to Earth. It explained also why he had failed to find a single trace of Engineer Nick Cullin.

All had been taken by press-gangs. All had been forced into the service of the Martian rebels.

Troubled times had indeed settled on Mars. For the Martian colonists had risen in rebellion against the authority of Earth, claiming autonomy as their just reward for having settled the planet and rendered it habitable and thriving. They had formed their own government and sent a declaration of war to the Executive Council on Earth. Acting with the efficiency of long planning, they had seized the Mars-based outposts of the Space Guard and all police and government buildings. All Mars was now in their hands, and the only difficulty at present confronting them was the task of keeping it.

The Executive Council would not take this forcible division of the Empire as a matter of course. Its members knew that only in unity can there be peace, as had been amply proved by

the political consolidation of Earth. With Mars as a separate national entity, the dangers of war would be too many and frequent. Thus, more in the interest of preserving peace than preventing the break-up of the Empire, the Executive Council would take swift retaliatory measures.

In Thanokis, as in all other large cities of Mars, those passenger and freight vessels which had not been taken over by the rebels had been ordered to return to Earth. Among these was the *Dwarf Star*, on which Tom Avery and Buttons Doane served as pilots. Five of the crew were missing at the time the ship was scheduled to leave. Captain Houston had decided that he could get along without most of them, but Engineer Nick Cullin was a vital necessity. He had accordingly sent in search of Cullin a group including Avery and Buttons Doane. Avery guessed that Buttons, like himself, had failed to locate Cullin and had been returning to the ship at the end of his allotted time when waylaid by the press-gang.

The motives of the gang seemed clear enough to Avery. When the Executive Council sent the Earth Fleet to restore order on Mars, the rebels would need a fleet of their own to keep what they had won. The majority were farmers and laborers with little if any knowledge of operating and maintaining space ships. To man the ships of their motley fleet, then, the rebels needed experienced pilots, navigators, engineers, and crewmen. And they were obtaining these by impressing into their service loyal subjects of Earth.

VERY knew, if captured, that he'd be treated little better than a slave in the hands of the rebels. A cold hand clutched at him as he realized that he was fighting for liberty—his and But-

tons Doane's.

Avery knew he had one advantage. The gang had been ordered not to shoot. This injunction did not apply to himself.

He swung the barrel of the vibro-ray pistol, triggered it swiftly, seeking to disable rather than kill. For a moment the rebels fell back. But he could not cover all sides of himself at the same time. One of his attackers suddenly dove in on a temporarily exposed flank.

Avery bent under the impact of the man's body, his space pilot's trained, lightning-fast reflexes aiding him. Using the man's own momentum, Avery swung him around, and with a twist of his shoulders, hurled the man squarely into the ranks of the others.

Though a failure, the rebel's attempt had served its purpose. The others were given the opportunity to close in on Avery. He found himself suddenly the focus of a storm of smashing fists. Bracing himself against the wall of the building which protected his rear, Avery lashed out with a foot. The recipient went staggering back, upsetting two of his companions behind him. Avery darted into the gap, lashing out with his left fist and the clubbed barrel of the vibro-ray pistol in his right. Those of the gang remaining were forced once more to scatter.

Avery knew he could have made a dash to safety then. The rebels were momentarily halted, dazed. But he didn't run. He had to rescue Buttons. He couldn't see the little co-pilot anywhere near him. Buttons was probably lying unconscious somewhere in the background, he decided.

Avery's mind worked desperately as the rebels climbed one by one to their feet. Maybe he could draw them in a chase, lose them. Then he could circle back and pick up Buttons.

"Get him this time, you hopeless in-

competents!" the unseen leader snapped. "We're losing time."

Again Avery noticed something clear and soft about the voice. But he had no chance to puzzle over the identity of its owner. The press-gang came at him again.

Avery tensed with the decision to put his plan into action. His darting eyes picked out a weak spot in the oncoming line of figures. It was a group of three at his left. He leaped at the nearest, ducked under a swung fist, and pushed him into the knees of the second. Whirling, he caught the downward slash of the pistol butt of the third on his upraised arm. He whipped up a fist, felt teeth give under its impact.

Avery sprang through the opening he had made, intending to run, draw the rebels into a chase. But as he started, a figure loomed up suddenly beside him. For an amazed second, he stared numbly into the face of a girl—then he went sprawling to the ground. Dismay and chagrin shook him even more than the pain of his fall. He had tripped over one of the girl's purposefully extended legs!

Before Avery could regain his feet, a pistol butt crashed sickeningly into his head. He sagged limply, fighting off agony and nausea. The pistol butt came down again.

There was a burst of colored lights, even brighter than the first had been. And then Avery plunged into a miasma of utter blackness that soaked into him and through him, blotting away all feeling and thinking.

AVERY regained consciousness with the realization that someone had him by the shoulders and was shaking him vigorously. The action made his battered head throb agonizingly. He groaned in protest and forced his eyes

open. He found himself staring into the anxious, freckled features of Buttons Doane.

"Tom!" Button cried in relief. "Are you all right? Have you been hurt bad?"

"My head is splitting wide open," Avery grunted. "But otherwise I seem to be in one piece. How's everything with you, kid?"

"Oh, I'm all right. Woke up myself just a few minutes ago. I got socked over the head a short time after that gang grabbed me."

Avery nodded. "I happened to be taking the same street to the space port as you were, and heard you yell. I tried to pull a boy scout rescue stunt, but got laid out myself. And believe it or not, Buttons, the person who did it was a woman."

Buttons gasped, "A woman!" His blue eyes widened in realization. "Say—I heard a voice before I went down. I thought it sounded funny, and now I know why. But, Tom, how can a woman be mixed up in this?"

Avery shrugged. "Rebels are of both sexes, Buttons, don't forget that. Women have been throwing a lot of weight around in politics and business, and it isn't too surprising to find them mixed up in rebellions, too." Avery propped himself up on an elbow and peered appraisingly about him. He saw that they were in small, cell-like room, furnished sparsely with an upper and lower bunk bed, and a table and chairs, all fastened immovably to the floor. A porthole in the wall showed Avery what his ears had already informed him—they were in space. The metal fabric of the room hummed to the steady roar of atomic motors.

Avery sat up, shaking off a momentary spell of sick dizziness. He said presently, "Well, we might as well face it. We're in trouble, Buttons. We're

just a couple of slaves now, and we'll be expected to jump any time the rebels crack the whip. And if a destroyer of the Earth Fleet gets its guns lined up on this ship—as one most certainly will in time—we go with it."

Buttons nodded dully, the freckles dark against the skin of his pain-drawn face. He brushed absently at the cowlick of straw-colored hair which seemed to hang perpetually over his eyes. He said:

"I know, Tom. I've had time to think about it. But I'm not afraid. I just don't like the idea of helping these fool rebels knock our own people off. If there's any fighting to do, I want to do it on the side of Earth."

"My own sentiments exactly," Avery said. "We may get a chance to do that yet, Buttons. This ship is in space now, but it'll have to land sometime. And when it does, we can try to make a break."

"Think we could get away?" Buttons asked eagerly.

"If we play it right," Avery said with a confidence he tried hard to feel. He rose from the bunk and went over to the porthole. He peered out at the ebony vastness of space, flecked with countless supernally brilliant stars. After a moment he made out the bright threads of flame that were the rocket exhausts of a number of ships ahead and to one side.

"We seem to be part of a fleet," he said. "And it looks like we're headed for Earth. But why Earth?"

Buttons' eyes widened excitedly. "The Moon, Tom! The rebels are heading for the Moon. Don't you see? That's where the Earth Fleet is based. The rebels intend to destroy the fleet before it can be used against them!"

"And it might succeed, too," Avery said slowly. "There hasn't been a war for several decades. And as it almost

always happens in times of peace, the military arm of a nation is neglected. The revolution on Mars caught the Earth Fleet totally unprepared. By the time it is fully manned and equipped, it may be too late."

"Then we'd better pray for a miracle," Buttons said. He fell silent, pulling absently at his cow-lick. After a moment he said musingly, "I wonder how Cap Houston is going to get the *Dwarf Star* home. First Cullin, and now you and me."

"I guess the *Dwarf Star* will have to stay," Avery said. "But Cap will get home. He and the rest of the crew can always join some other ship leaving for Earth."

THERE was a sudden click from the door. The panel slid open, revealing two of the rebel crew. Avery tensed, then relaxed as he saw the flame pistols in their hands.

"Come on out," one of the men growled. "You've had enough time to come around. The captain wants to look you guys over."

Avery shrugged and gestured to Buttons. "Come on, Kid, let's go meet the head slave-driver. Smile pretty, and maybe we won't have to scrub too many decks."

Avery and Buttons were ushered through a maze of passageways, and finally into a large, luxuriously furnished cabin. A group of people were seated there about a huge circular table. Even before he got around to inspecting them individually, Avery became aware of an atmosphere of tension, conflict. They had stopped speaking immediately upon the entrance of Avery and Buttons, and while there were no sounds which could be analyzed for an indication as to what was wrong, the positions in which they had frozen showed clearly that they had been interrupted during

the course of a quarrel which had been anything but friendly.

With more zeal than formality, Avery and Buttons were shoved by their guards toward the table. One of them stepped up beside a chair in which sat a person whose back was turned to Avery. The guard saluted.

"Here are the new recruits, Captain."

The rebel captain turned. As one, Avery and Buttons gasped.

"A woman!" Buttons blurted. "A darned woman!"

Avery felt himself beyond the ability to voice a reaction of any kind. The captain of the ship was a woman, true enough—and obviously the very same woman who had led the press-gang back in Thanokis. But more than that, Avery knew her. As if, he thought, he could ever have forgotten.

He'd had only a moment's glimpse of her in Thanokis before unconsciousness claimed him, and even then, despite the dim light, he'd been struck by a sense of familiarity. In the press of ensuing events, he had failed to recall the incident. But now it returned to him forcefully.

Across the gulf of five years came the ghosts of old memories. Avery felt dully amazed that they had not lost their power to hurt. He'd thought his old life had been placed beyond the reach of any useless regrets, but sight of the girl had torn a large gap in the wall of his self-assurance. With an effort, Avery thrust the old memories away from him. They were, after all, of the past—and this was the present.

His eyes brought the girl back into focus again. He became aware that she was staring at him just as intently as he'd been staring at her. Her hand went to her lips as though to stifle a name that had been forming there. Then her hand dropped, and the surprise in her face faded as she got herself

back under control.

Avery looked away, glancing from face to face of the others seated around the table. His eyes narrowed. One face leaped out at him, became the only important thing in the room. The face moved, flinched, as though dreading the impact of Avery's eyes.

The others in the cabin hadn't missed this second act of the strange, silent drama which Avery's entrance had produced. Their bewilderment at the reaction to Avery of the second of their group was increased by the realization that Avery and the other could easily have passed as twins, so close was the resemblance between them.

AVERY looked at his old enemy, and it was as though five years had never passed. The familiar hate was as bitter and virulent as it had ever been. But he didn't pause to wonder at the circumstances which had brought the threads of their separate lives to cross once more at this point. He was aware only of an all-pervading sense of danger. The situation of Buttons and himself had been delicate enough from the outset, and this totally unexpected encounter with . . . the other . . . had rendered it infinitely worse.

Avery knew that a lot depended on his own reactions. If he pretended indifference and kept his mouth shut, perhaps he would be permitted to live long enough to find some means of escape for Buttons and himself. He had to act as though this meeting with his duplicate meant nothing to him aside from the fact of their close similarity. He knew the others in the room would dismiss the little by-play of the past few seconds as merely the result of that similarity and nothing more.

Avery shrugged, smiled a little, and continued his inspection of the people around the table. He found a further

surprise in store for him. Not personally, as he did the first two, but indirectly, from telecasts and newstape photos. All were powerful and wealthy Martian colonials. Financiers and industrialists of one kind or another, they among them owned practically the whole of Mars.

Avery knew these men as a group of the most ruthless, ambitious individuals in the System. And suddenly one certain aspect of the Martian revolution became clear to him. The revolution had not been the enterprise of the Martian colonists alone. These men, Avery guessed, had had more than a minor part in it. While it was true that the rebels had formed their own government, Avery knew who would actually rule. The men who controlled industry and finance.

The revolution had been their bid for freedom from the controls of the Executive Council. With those controls removed, monopolies would form, prices would rise, accompanied by a gradual decrease in wages and an increase in working hours. The colonists with their rebellion had, in effect, tied around their necks an economic noose.

But, remembering the atmosphere of conflict which he had noticed upon entering the room, Avery guessed that all was not going too smoothly with the arch-plotters. He wondered what could be wrong.

The girl who was the captain of the rebel ship said, "What are your names?"

Avery smothered a wry smile. She didn't know his name. Of course.

He heard Buttons answer. Then his own voice sounded.

The girl considered them gravely. She wore a trim blue uniform which moulded itself cleanly to the slim lines of her body. Her eyes were a very clear and disturbing gray. Her dark hair

had been cut short in mannish fashion, and an attempt to subdue the crisp curls seemed to have been made but had not succeeded. She said:

"You both are pilots?"

Avery nodded. "I'm a senior pilot. Buttons, here, is a junior, but he'd rank higher if it wasn't for his age."

"Aw!" Buttons said.

The girl said, "I'm Captain Valerie Mills. We can use experienced pilots. If you two will come over to our side, you'll be given lieutenant's rank and immediate freedom of the ship."

"And if not?" Avery asked.

VALERIE MILLS spread her hands.

"Then you'll have to labor in the engine room like any common crewman. We couldn't trust anyone at the controls of the ship of whose loyalty we weren't certain."

"Then you'd better send us down to the engine room," Avery said. "Or let us go," he added.

The girl sank even white teeth into her lower lip. Slowly her features flushed. "We're not criminals," she said. "What do you have against joining us? We're fighting for a good cause—the freedom of Mars."

"There's a lot of people on Mars," Avery said. "A lot would seem to depend on the question as to which group of people will benefit from freedom the most." He looked away from the girl, and for just a moment allowed his eyes to embrace the men seated around the table. Then he looked back at the girl and went on, "These are the people to whom freedom will mean the most—freedom from the economic restraints of the Earth Executive Council. With unlimited control of transportation, power, and finance, they'll have all the real authority. If that's the kind of freedom you mean, I don't want to have any part in helping it."

Valerie Mills said nothing. She looked thoughtfully at her hands.

The man who was Tom Avery's double rose to his feet. Standing erect, much of the appearance of similarity between Avery and himself was destroyed. He was heavier, the flesh of his body sagging with easy living. His face was lined with ambition and greed. He said ponderously:

"Captain Mills, by their own words, these men are dangerous. We couldn't possibly use them in any capacity, however minor, in which they could be depended upon not to cause trouble. They have intelligence and rank, and constant supervision over them alone would not be enough. I move that they be exterminated at once." He glanced at the others around the table. Except for the girl, all nodded solemn assent.

VALERIE MILL'S face darkened grimly. "I thought, Clyde Ravell, that we'd discussed thoroughly the matter of your constant suggestions. I don't want to start quarreling all over again, but I must remind you that I am in command here, and that I am fully qualified to make any and all decisions. If you and the others want authority in purely military matters, why don't you put on uniforms and fight like the rest of us?"

Clyde Ravell shrugged his fleshy shoulders easily. "It's our money and our brains that's running this show, Val. We can't be expected to fight like common soldiers into the bargain."

"But it's common soldiers who are actually winning this war," Valerie Mills said. "Your contributions of money and brains mean nothing as long as you sit in safety while others do the fighting. I know very well that you and your friends came along on this mission merely to have a quick means of escape should our attack on the

Moon bases fail. Such tender consideration for your own skins certainly doesn't give you any right to order me around." The girl made a gesture of dismissing the subject.

"I said I didn't want to renew the quarrel, and I mean it. I don't intend to kill these men"—she indicated Avery and Buttons—"merely out of vague fears of sabotage. They're smart enough to know that if they destroy the ship, they go with it. And since we're part of a fleet, the destruction of one ship wouldn't accomplish anything."

Ravell's face was gray with uncontrollable fury. His lips worked, but no sounds came out. Slowly and with a perceptible effort, he got himself in check. He said thickly, "Regardless of what you think, Val, the others and I have a voice in the running of this organization. You're overlooking realities. A revolution costs money, and the group I represent has so far been the only source. Everyone connected with us knows that. Don't doubt for an instant that it hasn't given us the right to express our opinions in all government and military matters."

Valerie Mills rose slowly to her feet, gray eyes fixed steadily on those of Clyde Ravell. One slim hand rested on the butt of the flame gun holstered at her belt. She spoke slowly, almost musingly.

"I don't think I understood that clearly enough, Clyde. But now I do. In other words, the colonists haven't won independence at all. You and the others tricked them into thinking so, intending all the time to set yourselves up as a bunch of back-room dictators. The whole revolution has been a mockery and a sham."

Ravell's lips pulled back from his teeth in a grimace meant for a smile. "So!" he said softly. "A traitor to the cause, eh?" He glanced around the

table slowly, insinuatingly. His distorted smile was echoed on the faces of the others. A few heads nodded approval.

"You're a fool, Clyde!" Valerie Mills said, features white and scornful. "You know very well that I'm fighting for the freedom of Mars—but I'm not hiding under a mask of hypocrisy while doing so."

"You're still a traitor to *our* cause," Ravell said. "We paid for the revolution, and we certainly would be fools if we didn't expect something out of it. You're an idealist. Your kind is going to be dangerous later on. You doubted my authority. Well, I'm going to show you—"

Valerie Mills pulled her flame gun free.

Ravell said quickly, "Guards! Grab her!"

THE two rebels who had brought Avery and Buttons to the cabin acted unhesitatingly. They swooped on Valerie. In an instant she was disarmed, her hands pinned behind her back. The two captive pilots had momentarily been overlooked. Nor did Avery intend to wait until someone finally remembered his and Buttons' presence.

"Buttons!" Avery said. As he spoke he moved, seizing the rebel nearest him. A choking arm under the man's neck and a painful knee in his back convinced him swiftly that it would be a good idea to release his hold on the girl. Avery shifted his grip, swung the man around, and hurled him like a sack of grain squarely into the faces of the nearest of the magnates about the table, all of whom had now leaped to their feet.

A glance darted at Buttons showed Avery that the little co-pilot needed no help. Jumping to the table, Avery

leaped at Clyde Ravell.

Features twisting in sudden panic, Ravell attempted to dart aside. He forgot the chair behind him, fixed to the floor, and sprawled into it. Before he could rise again and carry out his first impulse, Avery reached his side of the table. Grasping the other's tunic front, Avery shoved him back against the chair, holding him helpless.

"I've been wanting to do this for a long time," he said. He smiled at Ravell. Then his fist curved around in a swift arc and thudded against Ravell's cheek. Not hard enough to knock him out, but just hard enough to teach him the meaning of pain. Again Avery's fist moved. And again. Ravell screamed thinly.

The others recovered from their paralysis at the swift moves of Avery and Buttons. Some began shouting for help. The rest, seemingly possessed of more courage, swarmed upon Avery.

With a yell of encouragement, Buttons threw himself into the mass of figures. Valerie Mills had reclaimed her flame pistol. She held it by the barrel, club fashion, swinging its heavy butt against the skulls of such of Ravell's would-be rescuers as came within her reach. The three were more than holding their own when a knot of guards burst into the room.

"Stop it!" the leader of the guards shouted. "Stop—or we shoot!"

They held pneumatic machine rifles. Emitting a constant stream of pea-sized metal pellets, the weapons were capable of cutting a man in two.

Avery and Buttons raised their hands. Valerie Mills tossed her pistol to the table and looked disgusted.

Ravell rose from the chair, rubbing at his bruised cheek, and walked forward. His eyes blazed vengefully as they settled on Avery. Protected by the weapons of the guard, his arrogance

quickly returned.

"You're going to pay for what you just did," Ravell told Avery. "I thought I got rid of you once before, but this time I'm going to be more thorough. You and your friend are going out of an airlock—without space suits!"

"I'll be waiting for you in hell," Avery said. "I know I won't have to wait long."

Ravell's face contorted in rage. "Cover him!" he snapped at the guard. Then, careful not to block the aim of the guns, he slapped Avery's face stingingly, repeatedly, with the back of his hand. Finally, breathing harshly in exhaustion, he stopped.

Avery stood quietly. He said nothing more. The bunched muscles at his jaws slowly relaxed. There was something in his eyes that wasn't good to see.

RUBBING his hand, Ravell turned to Valerie Mills. "As for you . . . well, you know what happens to a traitor. There'll be no court-martial. Your words were heard, and I know all will agree with me on your sentence. Since you seem to sympathize with these two loyalists to the extent of helping them a moment ago, I'll let you have the pleasure of accompanying them out of the airlock."

Valerie's lip curled in contempt. "And to think that I once . . . almost—" She didn't finish. A shudder rippled through her, and she looked away.

Ravell swung purposefully to the guards. He said, "From now on this is the flagship. This order is to be relayed to the other ships of the fleet. We will carry on at full speed to the Moon. The original plan of attack is to be followed in full. We will do the directing, but no fighting. As for these"—he waved a disdainful hand at Avery, Buttons, and Valerie—"take them to an

airlock and dump them out."

The leader of the guards grinned darkly and saluted. Then he jerked the muzzle of his pneumatic at the condemned trio. "Come on!" he said.

With a shrug of hopelessness, Avery started into motion. And then he was thrown violently against the wall as the ship abruptly gave a terrific lurch. The other-occupants of the cabin immediately followed, sprawling in a squirming tangle of arms and legs to the floor. Startled grunts and gasps arose. A vibro-ray pistol went off somewhere in the room, its charge biting with a shower of sparks into the ceiling.

"We've been hit!" a man shouted.

Confusion reigned as those in the cabin fought wildly to extricate themselves from the chaos of intermingled bodies. Several who had managed to regain their feet were thrown once more into the writhing mass as the ship gave another lurch.

The cabin door burst open. An officer leaped in, cap gone, hair and uniform wildly disheveled.

"Captain! The Earth Fleet has left the Moon! They're attacking!"

THE last thing Avery had been expecting was an opportunity to escape. When one presented itself, he acted instantly and without hesitation.

One of Ravell's fellow magnates lay nearby, stunned, a vibro-ray pistol gripped laxly in his hand. Avery seized the weapon and rose, searching eagerly for Buttons and Valerie. He found them even as they were climbing back to their feet. They'd been lucky, he realized. Standing apart by themselves, they hadn't been crushed beneath a pile of bodies as some of the others had been.

Alarm bells began ringing throughout the ship, drowning out the clamoring voices of the crew. The vessel lurched under the impact of still an-

other hit.

Avery reached Buttons and Valerie, shoved them unceremoniously toward the door. Emerging into the passageway, they were buffeted by frantically running figures.

"The space suits!" Avery shouted at Valerie above the din. "Lead us to them—and hurry! The air may be going any minute now."

Valerie nodded quickly and set off at a stumbling run, swerving frequently to avoid collision with some oncoming member of the crew. The first two banks of space suit emergency lockers to which she led them had already been ransacked. The third, luckily, still contained a number of the metal garments. They were just in time. Already the ship was growing cold, the air thin and difficult to breathe.

"The control room's next," Avery said, struggling into a suit.

The girl in the lead again, they clanked and clattered through the passageways toward the control room. Parts of their progress were made through scenes of death and destruction. Bloated, discolored corpses were scattered along those corridors which atomite shells had opened to the vacuum of space. The Earth Fleet had taken the rebels so completely by surprise that little if any organized, intelligent effort had been made to defend or abandon ship. Avery doubted that the rebels, untrained and inexperienced in space warfare, could have made a better showing even with ample warning of the Earth Fleet's approach. What the Fleet may have lacked in numbers and equipment, it more than made up for in skill and experience.

They reached the control room, clambered inside. Avery lowered his vibro-ray pistol as he saw he wouldn't have to use it after all. All those in the control room were dead. A gaping rent in

one wall, through which glittered the stars of space, indicated the cause. Avery closed and locked the door, and strode swiftly to where the bodies of the two pilots sagged in their great padded seats. He unfastened their safety straps. Then, aided by Buttons, he placed the bodies in a far corner of the room.

The ship shook to the impact of an atomite shell. Pilotless, its atomic motors carrying it on a steady course, it made an easy target.

Avery dropped his space suited bulk into one of the pilot seats. Buttons took the other, while Valerie settled into one before the navigator's table, nearby. As Avery reached toward the control panels, he saw a slim gleaming shape flash across the forward viewport. It was a destroyer of the Earth Fleet, and it seemed to be looking for something.

Swiftly, Avery switched on the radio unit of his suit, motioning for Buttons to do likewise. When both were in tune, he said:

"Get in contact with the Earth Fleet. They're waiting for us to let them know we've had enough. They'll keep rid-dling us until we do so."

BUTTONS nodded and clumsily manipulated the dials and switches of the space radio. Behind the faceport, his face suddenly became gray. The space radio, in spite of all his efforts, remained lifeless.

"Something's wrong," Buttons gasped. "The thing won't work!"

Avery's face tightened anxiously. That left only one thing to do—turn and run as fast as the engines would take them.

In desperate haste, he bent to the controls. Playing the power bar, punching tube activator studs, he swung the battered vessel around in a great half

circle. There was no time either to decide on a destination or set a course. Avery merely pointed the ship toward outer space, steadied it, then turned full on through all drive tubes the mighty, thrusting power of the atomics.

The voice of Valerie Mills came metallically to Avery. The girl had turned on her own radio unit. Half out of her chair, she was pointing tensely at the navigator's meta-glass observation blister.

"They're coming after us, Tom Avery!" she said. "Three of them. They're going to—" Abruptly, she lifted her arms in a defensive gesture, shrank back in her chair. Simultaneously, the ship jumped and shook. The muted roar of the atomics rose to a scream as if in sudden pain. The three in the control room were pressed into their seats by a giant's hand of sudden, tremendous acceleration. Remorselessly, mercilessly, the hand pressed against them. Consciousness was wrung from them like water from a sponge.

Slowly, slowly, Avery crawled through the stygian dark toward the bright light of awareness far ahead. He opened his eyes. Memory returned to him with a rush. He jerked erect in his chair. The movement sent flooding through him a wave of excruciating pain. The sudden increase in acceleration—how long ago had it been?—had left his body as stiff and sore as though from a terrific beating.

And remembering the pain-filled shriek of the atomics, he gazed anxiously through the forward viewport. He released a gasp of incredulity. Directly ahead in space was the bright disk of an object which could not be anything but Jupiter! His glance shot to the meters and gauges on the control panel. The needle of the speed indicator had swung all the way across the dial,

resting now against the stop. The vessel was hurtling through space at a speed which could not be registered!

With his spaceman's training, Avery realized that, at the present speed and course of the ship, a collision with Jupiter was inevitable. He had to swing the ship aside. Experimentally, he moved the power bar and touched the activator stud to the rear tubes. There was no response. In quick succession, he punched the studs to the lateral and forward tubes. Again no response. The atomics were dead!

Avery's haggard face grew bleak. He knew what had happened. One of the Earth Fleet vessels pursuing them had by chance landed a shell in some vital part of the atomic motors. The energy of the two in combination had brought about a titanic, abnormal release of power.

Avery did not pause to marvel over the freak of circumstance which had enabled the pilotless ship to penetrate safely the dangerous region of the Asteroid Belt. They had gotten through—that was sufficient. What mattered most was the fact that even now the far-reaching tentacles of Jupiter's gravitation were reaching out for them, drawing them swiftly and surely to their doom.

THE SITUATION was a highly precarious one—more so if Ravell and the others had survived the bombardment and the sudden acceleration. Avery knew that Clyde Ravell would never rest until he, Avery, was dead. For Ravell's future—his very existence, in fact—depended on getting Avery permanently out of the way.

Avery's earphones crackled as Buttons stirred into life. The little copilot sat up, breath hissing as pain shot through him. Slowly, he grew aware of Avery.

"What . . . what happened?" Buttons whispered.

Avery flicked a glance at Valerie Mills, who now was also coming around. He explained what had taken place.

Buttons sighed and said disgustedly, "Out of the frying pan, into the fire, that's us."

Valerie Mills had obviously overheard the major portion of Avery's explanation. Her voice came haltingly over Avery's radio unit.

"Isn't there something we can do?"

Avery said, "Nothing, except to sit back and wait for the end. If you find that hard to do, you might try turning full on the oxygen tank of your suit. It helps to forgetting almost as well as an alcoholic tablet."

"Please don't try to be funny," Valerie said. "When you do, you remind me too much of Clyde Ravell."

"I do look like him, don't I?" Avery asked softly.

"I didn't mean that," Valerie said. "What I meant is that you remind me of the way he used to be several years ago when I . . . but never mind. You might be interested to know that our position isn't as hopeless as you think it is."

Buttons snorted derisively. "That's just a woman for you. Here we are, engines dead and lined out straight for old Jupe, and she says our position isn't hopeless."

Valerie's voice crackled angrily. "If you weren't such a fool, you'd know what I meant. You call yourself a pilot, yet you don't seem to know that space vessels carry life boats."

"Oh," Buttons said.

"I wasn't familiar with this ship," Avery said, "or I'd have thought of that. Anyway, lead us to them. Several of Jupiter's moons have been colonized, and we'll be all right if we reach them."

Stifling gasps of pain as tortured

muscles were called into action, they rose from their chairs. They spent a moment in limbering up, then started toward the door. Half-way there, they froze abruptly into startled rigidity. For in the earphones of each had come the heavy tones of Clyde Ravell!

"... radio units on?" Ravell was asking.

The voices of a number of men answered. They had just donned space suits, Avery realized. He reached for the vibro-ray pistol at his belt, a cold tautness gripping him. His glance at Valerie and Buttons warned them to maintain silence. Tuned to the general communications band, they would be overheard.

Ravell spoke again. "All right, now get the rifles out of the locker over there. We'll take to the lifeboats and land on one of the moons of Jupiter. But first we'll see if the girl and those two pilots are still aboard. If they are, get the one called Avery first thing you do."

"There's no time for a search, Clyde," one of the men objected. "We're getting too close to Jupiter. When we're in the lifeboats, we'll have to fight the speed of this ship all the way. The longer we stay here, the less time we'll have for deceleration."

The others chorused agreement.

"The girl and the pilots have most probably left the ship long ago anyway," a man said.

"I know what we'll do," Ravell said. "We'll destroy the lifeboats we don't need. Then if the girl and the two pilots are aboard, they won't have any means of escaping. The silence of the ship shows the engines were hit. It's headed straight for Jupiter, and can't be steered or slowed. Even if they jump ship in space suits, the velocity and direction given them by the ship will still carry them helplessly toward

Jupiter."

There were murmurs of general satisfaction. Ravell's voice sounded again.

"All right, get your things together. We leave at once."

VERY waited, suspecting a trick.

But the sounds which came through his earphones assured him that the rebels actually were making ready to depart. He motioned for Valerie and Buttons to shift their radio bands to one which he indicated with his fingers. His face was drawn and anxious. When the new contact was made, he said:

"We can't wait for them to destroy the extra lifeboats. We've got to get one—or die like trapped rats."

"I'm with you, Tom," Buttons said staunchly.

"And I," Valerie Mills said, though her features behind the faceport were pale. "Let's go. I'll lead the way."

Avery unlocked and opened the door, peered cautiously into the passageway beyond. There was no one in sight. With the girl in the lead, they started toward the lifeboat moorings.

They crept through the damaged vessel like space-suited ghosts. Avery felt sweat trickle down his face. It seemed hard to breathe. In his gloved hands, he gripped tensely the butt of the vibro-ray pistol.

"We're almost there," Valerie said presently.

Avery nodded and quickened his pace. They reached the end of the passageway, turned a corner. Directly ahead were the lifeboat alcoves.

Valerie's breath drew in sharply.

A man in a space suit stood in one of the alcoves, engaged in unfastening the moorings of a lifeboat. He looked up, caught sight of the now motionless trio. Though they were hidden by their suits, the man sensed in their attitudes that they were not of his group. A

question over the radio unit, unanswered, may have confirmed this suspicion.

The man shouted an alarm. Almost at the same time, he reached for the pneumatic rifle standing against a nearby wall.

Whipping up the vibro-ray pistol, Avery fired. The rebel merely stopped moving. The terrific heat made by contact of the ray with the metal of the man's suit had killed him instantly, but the semi-flexible garment held him upright.

"Inside!" Avery commanded, indicating the lifeboat which had already been unfastened. He faced the passageway as Valerie and Buttons climbed into the tiny ship, his weapon pointed alertly.

And then the space-suited figures of Ravell and the others burst into view. They took the situation in at a glance. Sighting their rifles, they began to fire wildly.

Avery dove into the ship and slammed shut the airlock, just an instant ahead of a stream of bullets. Buttons was already at the controls, and the motors were humming. Avery's entrance was the signal for their departure. With the added momentum of the parent vessel, they were soon a safe distance away in space.

"I'll take over now," Avery told Buttons. "Ravell and his playmates will be after us shortly."

"Where do you intend to go?" Valerie asked.

"Ganymede," Avery said. "If Ravell follows us, Ganymede will be the best place of shelter. Plenty of nice hiding places."

Face etched with deep lines of weariness, Avery coaxed every available bit of speed from the lifeboat. Hours of nerve-wracking strain and urgency dropped away.

Valerie sat slumped in her chair. She seemed as motionless as though in sleep, but her red-rimmed eyes were open. Buttons peered through a viewport, watching their rear. Two bright specks were following closely.

At last Ganymede was under them, and the lifeboat was dropped down to the surface on its underjets. A shaking thud gave notice of their landing.

Avery relaxed for a moment in his chair, expelling breath in a tired sigh. At that moment the opportunity to close his eyes and sleep seemed the most desirable thing in the world. But there was no time, he knew. Thought of Ravell in close pursuit pulled him erect. Gesturing to Valerie and Buttons, he climbed from the ship.

"Get out of your suits," he advised. "We've got to be able to move light and fast. Buttons, get the pack of emergency rations."

THE thin, cold air of Ganymede was like wine to Avery's lungs after his long confinement in the space suit. He gazed about him, searching for possible places of hiding. The terrain was bleak, rugged, covered with great rocks and boulders. Strange, gnarled trees and twisted shrubs grew from occasional patches of soil. At one point, close in the distance, a line of hills rose.

Buttons returned with the pack, and they were ready to move. Avery swung into the lead, setting out for the hills. They seemed to offer the best place of refuge. Valerie hurried up beside Avery, her small features intent as she fought to keep her balance. In the lighter gravity of Ganymede, there was a constant tendency to rise with each step and sway toward the direction of motion. Buttons brought up the rear, grumbling to himself.

"I'm just a pack animal," he said once, referring obviously to the emer-

gency rations slung over his shoulders.

"I'll carry the pack for you," Valerie offered sweetly.

"No!" Buttons snapped. "Women can't be trusted with anything. You'd lose it right away."

"Then carry it and shut up," the girl said.

The hills slowly drew nearer. The stretch of scattered rocks and boulders and occasional trees gradually thinned out. Before them spread a bare and level area which promised easier going. But as they approached, Avery stopped, frowning. The ground ahead seemed to be covered with mud. Scattered profusely about were small pools of what seemed to be thick, dirty water. It wasn't water, however, Avery realized a moment later, but oil, or some substance greatly resembling it in general appearance. He glanced uneasily at the sky, said:

"I think we'd better go around this stuff. It doesn't look deep or sticky, but I'd rather not take any chances with the crazy physical properties these satellites often show."

Parts of the detour lay through moss-covered gulleys and, along the tops of rocky ridges, which made their progress necessarily slow. Avery kept glancing at the sky, achingly aware that precious minutes were being lost. They had to find a hiding place in the hills before Ravell and the others arrived. If they were sighted, they could at best make only a pitiable defense. The only weapon among them was Avery's vibro-ray pistol. Silently he cursed the excitement of their escape from the ship which had made them overlook the prime requisite of obtaining other weapons.

They had been moving parallel to the oil-spread area, and now they reached its end. The hills were still a good distance away. The ground gradu-

ally rose to break into a froth of tumbled rocks and boulders at the base of the hills.

Avery peered once more at the sky—and stiffened. Two tiny glinting shapes had appeared, growing swiftly larger even as he watched.

"Here they come!" Avery cried. "Hurry now. Make for those rocks near the bottom of the hills."

It was almost impossible to run in the real sense of the word. They bounded along in leaps of fifteen feet, and each time they came down it was more often than not on hands and knees. The fact that the ground was rising and covered with rubble didn't help matters any.

The rapidly descending lifeboats behind them came around in a circle, searching. Those within sighted the ship in which Avery and the others had landed. They flamed down on their underjets, and shortly men began rushing from the airlocks, removing their space suits.

"There they are!" Ravell shouted eagerly, as he caught sight of the bounding figures ahead. "After them! And get that big pilot!"

Avery, Buttons, and Valerie had almost reached the rocks and boulders. Haste had made their leaps longer and their landings accordingly more severe. They gasped with tortured lungs in the rarified air.

VALERIE crumpled suddenly in a fall as a rock turned under her foot. She choked back a moan of pain, gasped, "Go on—don't wait for me!"

But with a strange, twisted expression on his face, Avery bounded back to the girl and scooped her up in his arms. With the added burden, he was forced to go more slowly.

Behind came Ravell and others like a pack of hounds on the chase. The

dull, cough-like sounds of their pneumatic rifles became suddenly audible as they opened fire.

Avery and Buttons reached the boulders split seconds ahead of death. The rebels were nearer, their shots closer. Avery deposited Valerie safely behind shelter and took up a position behind two close-grouped boulders. The space between them formed a notch at the top through which he could fire the vibro-ray pistol with minimum risk of being hit. He waited, dark-lined eyes bleak on the onrushing rebels.

"A gun! If I only had a gun," Buttons muttered.

Lips tightening in sudden anxiety, Avery checked the charges of his gun. Five. And there were seven of the rebels, he knew. Inside him something seemed to knot itself together and twist tight. Five shots wouldn't kill seven men. . . .

RAVELL and the others reached the far end of the oil-covered area which Avery had previously skirted. They didn't hesitate, but bounded forward over the soggy ground. Confident of their superior fire-power, they charged behind the barrage of their rifles.

Avery waited, a metallic glitter in his eyes as he watched the approaching figures. Flying pieces of rock occasionally spattered his face, drawing little trickles of blood. But he was conscious only of the nearing rebels and the thought that five shots wouldn't kill seven men. He determined grimly to get Ravell the very last thing he did. And Ravell, as though he sensed the resolve, was remaining cunningly in the rear while he exhorted his companions forward.

"Oh, if I only had a gun!" Buttons sobbed.

The rebels drew into range. They

were in the middle of the oil-covered area now, moving a little slower.

Five shots. . . . Avery began firing, slowly, carefully. Each shot had to count. His touch on the trigger of the pistol was almost a caress. Two of the rebels dropped. A third. Alarmed, they spread out. Avery changed position, firing from around the side of one of the two boulders. A fourth went down.

The remaining three rebels, which included Ravell, dropped flat in the oily muck, firing now with extreme care. Avery, behind the boulders, raged. One shot left—and Ravell was still alive. Each time Avery had fired at the rebel, he had hit instead some man in front of him. But Ravell had no such protection now. The other two had realized his tactics and were keeping clear of him.

Avery changed position again. He drew a bead on Ravell. With a tremendous effort of will, he forced steadiness into his aiming hand. He stopped breathing as slowly, slowly, he drew back the trigger. He fired—

And missed.

A bitter smile crept over Avery's face. The empty vibro-ray pistol slid from his limp fingers and dropped to the ground.

Ravell and his two companions would soon realize the meaning of Avery's silence—lack of further ammunition. In the knowledge that they were no longer endangered, they would rush forward, circle the boulders, pick off Avery, Buttons, and Valerie one by one.

And then there was a sound as if all the seething volcanoes of Hell had exploded in one tremendous eruption. Sheets of livid flame shot into the sky. Smoke began billowing and coiling in thick, black clouds. Screams of agony unendurable lifted above the hissing and crackling of the fire.

The explosion had pulled Avery to his feet. With Buttons and Valerie be-

side him, he stared in amazed incredulity at the raging holocaust.

"Great space!" Avery breathed.

Valerie seemed beyond words. Buttons sputtered:

"But—but what happened?"

"The oil—or whatever it was," Avery said slowly. "Ravell and the other two were in the middle of it when I fired my last shot. I missed, but the charge hit that stuff and ignited it. I don't think it was oil. It must have been something much more combustible. There are probably springs of it somewhere around here, shooting up occasionally to cover the ground. Ravell and the rest were . . . burned up alive."

"It was justice," Valerie murmured. "Poetic justice, the novels would call it. I never did like Clyde Ravell—that is, until about five years ago. You, Tom Avery . . . you're something like he used to be then."

BUTTONS' eyes abruptly grew wide.

"Yeah, Tom, you and Ravell looked enough like each other to be twins! And, Tom, why was he so darned anxious to get rid of you? What did he mean when he said he thought he'd got rid of you once before?"

Avery smiled mirthlessly and passed a hand wearily over his face. "Because, Buttons, I'm Clyde Ravell."

Buttons and Valerie were shocked into a numbed silence. They looked at Avery as if he were something strange that had suddenly dropped down out of the sky.

Buttons reached feebly for his cowlick, brushing at it dazedly. Slowly Valerie's eyes began to shine.

Avery said, "The man you knew as Clyde Ravell was really my stepbrother. My father married his mother when we both were kids. We hated each other on sight, and it got worse as we grew up. Anthony was . . . well,

he was a spoiled brat.

"Shortly after I finished college, my stepmother died. My father followed not long after, leaving most of his estate to me. That was a lot, as anyone who realizes the extent of the Ravell transport firm will know. Dad left Anthony the little he did, because he knew Anthony would only drink and gamble the money away.

"Anyhow, Anthony didn't intend to be cut out of the money. He arranged a horribly clever little scheme to get control of it. He hired a gang of thugs and had me kidnaped. I was cast adrift in space in an unfueled lifeboat that had painted on it the name of a space liner that had blown up in an engine mishap beyond Mars.

"By the sheerest of luck, I was rescued by a miner returning from the Asteroid Belt. When I got back to Earth, I found that Anthony had had his face remodeled by plastic surgery to look like mine. And from old newspaper reports, I learned that it was him instead of me who was supposed to have disappeared in the lifeboat. The liner to which it had ostensibly belonged had burned thoroughly, and the passenger lists went with the rest. Anybody could have been on the liner. There was no way to check up.

"As Clyde Ravell, I didn't exist any more. Anthony was me, and the person who was Anthony had supposedly disappeared in space. And there was nothing I could do about it. I knew Anthony would only be more careful the second time if he learned I was trying to establish my identity. So . . . well, I took a job as a spacehand, and gradually worked my way up to senior pilot. Life wasn't so bad—except for memories of a girl I had met in college. Her family was wealthy, and as Tom Avery, a poor space pilot, we were worlds apart. I never saw her again, until recently—

when she got mixed up in a revolution."

Avery finished speaking, and glanced at Valerie. She smiled slowly, her gray eyes very bright.

Buttons looked confused. He asked Avery, "Wha—what am I supposed to call you now?"

"Plain old Tom Avery. Anthony has, no doubt, wasted my entire fortune on the revolution, and there's little use in resuming my old identity. I'd only be in trouble with the authorities anyway, when the Executive Council finishes putting down the rebellion and starts looking for the men who were responsible." He shrugged, as though dismissing an unimportant subject. He finished:

"We'll eat the emergency rations and rest for a while. Then we'll return to the lifeboat and find a settlement somewhere."

Valerie's small face clouded. "I won't be able to go with you," she said. "I'm a rebel. If the people at the settlement find out, they'll turn me over to

the authorities. I know I was a fool for becoming involved in the revolution, but I really thought I was helping to bring about better conditions for the Martian colonists. I didn't know that I and the others like me were only dupes for . . . for Ravell and his friends."

Avery grinned. "The people at the settlement don't have to find out. Besides, they're colonists themselves, and more than likely they'll be in sympathy with the Martians."

Valerie studied her hands intently. "Tom, that girl you met in college . . . didn't you ever try to find out if she has anything against marrying a poor space pilot?"

"No," Avery said. "But . . . but has she?"

"Of course not!"

Buttons turned away in disgust from what followed a few seconds later. "Darn women!" he muttered. "Aw, come on, stop kissing and let's eat."

THE END



ENGLISH PLAGUE



By D. WROBLE

VERY often the return of a victorious army also brought the return of one of the dread scourges of a mortal plague.

The first instance of record of a plague striking on a wholesale basis affected the Roman Empire in the sixth century. With as little knowledge which the physician of that day possessed there was no method known to either prevent or allay the pestilence once it had begun. The only hope was that it would soon render itself harmless.

Perhaps the plague with the highest mortality rate was the "Great Plague of London" in the 17th century. King Henry VII had just returned to the city victorious in the field of battle and the city was joyous and well prepared for the ensuing celebration. Breathlessly, as it had always come, the Plague struck violently, taking great numbers in its first days. The great celebration of a triumphant country had changed to mourning. It was believed to have followed the train of the marching armies. Because it had been restricted for a long time to England and did not strike in Ireland it was

dubbed "English Plague." Because of its characteristics it was likewise called "Sweating Sickness." Anyone contracting the symptoms of profuse sweating and later prostration must have spent untold mental anguish for it generally killed within twenty-four hours, but should one survive this period he was out of danger.

Soon after, however, the plague crossed the channel and spread to the continent. It is said the countries of Europe had been more depopulated by the plague than all the previous wars in their history. The city of Marseilles was reduced to half its population and the like or greater numbers died in Denmark and Hungary. It was not until 1722 that the plague had worked itself out; a period some 50 years since it had begun in England.

The plague has occurred in Eastern countries since that time but in diminished vigor and it was not until 1894 that the causes of plague were discovered by Kitasato in Hongkong in his efforts to determine some method of prevention or cure.

I looked up at the bronzed figure.
He certainly packed a wallop . . .
He had knocked me out with ease.



Forgotten Hades

by Lee Francis

IN ALL fantasy, there is a thread of truth. Sometimes a person is unable to believe what he reads, for the words come from the mind of a man who has seen strange things, and is unable to give proof of what he writes. Yet his thoughts, while classified under fantasy, are real to him.

As in "Citadel of Hate," and "Appointment with the Past," I have enjoyed recording the wanderings of the

"Forgotten People," for they existed in the wild, windswept marshes of New Jersey, and society chooses to ignore their horrible problem.

I must divide this story into two distinct parts. I refuse to slow down Will Dean's account with foot notes. I give you the facts first and you will hear from Will Dean later in the story.

If you are amazed at the tragedy of the Forgotten People, it will be because



What was in this eerie swamp? Who were the Forgotten People? Will Dean went into the dank morass—and found out!

Will Dean saw and reported only what he saw. Call it history or fantasy. There is much history in fantasy and the reverse is also true.

Lee Francis.

In the summer of Nineteen-Forty, my sister-in-law, Lucille Forest, was acting as Chief Surgical Nurse in a large hospital south of New York. Week-ends away from home proved lonely for her, but she gradually found friends from various states. They included a student nurse from Ohio, a tall, bony kid from Oregon, and blonde twins from Chicago.

Came a hot Sunday afternoon and these girls decided to take a lunch down to the beach, cook corn in the sand and have a Sunday dinner near the Atlantic.

Let her tell the story as she wrote it in a letter to me. I was hard at work on "Citadel of Hate" at the time, and filed her information until such time as I could do proper research work on it.

Dear Lee:

Talk about Fantasy. Four girl friends and myself (you know none of them, so the names aren't important) walked out of the hospital this morning and straight into an incredible, horrible world. It isn't half as bad as it sounds, for we are all safely home once more, and you're in no danger of losing a sister-in-law. I promise you I won't go back.

We were told that it is against the law to light fires on the beach, unless one goes far south along the Jersey Coast, where civilization ends and the marshes close in.

I guess we drove longer than necessary, but finally we saw a spot where we thought we would reach the beach without too much walking. With our baskets of lunch, we cut across the marsh through the shoulder high grass

and swaying cat-tails. We tripped often in fish nets which had been laid out in the grass to dry. The day was dark and the winds scudding in from the sea, made the marsh a vast lost world.

LATER, we all confessed that from the moment we left the car, we felt a strange foreboding of evil to come. It wasn't anything we could put our finger on. Just a cold chill, and a feeling of panic in each of us. We climbed over the sea-wall and it was quite warm down on the beach. In a few minutes we had a fire going and the corn was ready to bury in the sand, once it became hot enough to roast the ears. The water was cold and we weren't in the mood for bathing.

We wandered up and down the beach and after a while one of my friends pointed out a half dozen children who had come down and were crawling along the sea-wall about fifty yards away. White caps kicked up far out at sea and the surf rolled in swiftly, pounding against the sand. Night was approaching.

We watched the children and they seemed very curious about us. They never came closer than the sea wall, and yet they increased in number until they were a dozen strong.

They had a number of tin cans which they seemed to be playing with.

I couldn't get those "kids" out of my mind. When the corn was cooking, I kept looking around at them. They didn't act like normal youngsters. In fact, I wondered at the time how they managed to get way down here in the marsh where we felt we would be quite alone.

Then I heard one of the girls gasp.

"Those aren't children."

I have never heard terror expressed in such simple words.

"That one on all fours," she contin-

ued breathlessly, "Look at him. He has a beard."

He did have. I was sure of it after I took a good look at him. He was a very old man (I would say about seventy). His beard was a dirty gray and it hung down to his waist. He was dressed, and don't call me imaginative for I saw him clearly as he came toward us, in a piece of burlap that covered his thighs, and an inner tube, slit down the middle and tied around his waist. He walked on his hands and feet across the sea wall, then sat down and stared at us like a monkey.

We realized that something very terrible was wrong. We had no right to be here. There was no one to protect us. Yet for a little while we bolstered our courage by laughing the whole thing off and trying to pretend that we weren't frightened.

None of us could take our eyes off those people. The sun came out for a few moments and we could see them clearly. They were all sizes, but most of them seemed dwarfed and stunted. There were old and young, dressed in every type of garment from flour sack to burlap loin cloth.

Then, one by one, they disappeared from the sea-wall back into the marsh.

When they were gone, panic took hold of us. We must go back through that marsh. We had to reach the car, and reach it before we were destroyed. I can't tell you why we felt that way, but we did.

We left the corn behind. We forgot most of the things we had brought. Clustering together, we started for the car. We reached the sea-wall, and there panic conquered us and we ran.

LEE, we ran wildly and it seemed as though we could never get through that maze of nets. Strangely, we saw no other sign of the swamp creatures.

We made the trip out of that marsh as fast as the Chev. would move, and by the time we reached the hospital, we were all admitting that each had been frightened out of her wits from the very first moment we entered the swamp.

How did it end? Who were they?

Lee, I'm not sure. You'll have to study your history or your statistics, or something, to find out about the Jackson Whites.

Yes, they were called the Jackson Whites. That much I learned from the staff at the hospital.

We couldn't get our friends to say much about them. When we told them where we had been, people shook their heads and said:

"You must have gone *much* too far south. Don't *ever* go back there. Terrible things could have happened."

That's the story, Lee, and I hope if you find out more than I have, you'll let me know. I'm curious about the Jackson Whites, but I'm not enough interested in them to go back to their marshes and swamps.

That's because I'm only a nurse, Lee, and not a curious old fiction writer.

By way of a lighter note, I'll be home for Christmas and hope to spend some time with you and Helen. Give Helen and the children my love and tell them I'll write to them soon. I had to get this thing off my mind for it has been troubling me and I think it should be looked into.

Lucille.

Would such a letter intrigue you? It did me. I wondered how, in a civilized country, such a group could exist. I confess that for a time I thought that my good sister-in-law was pulling my leg. Then, quite by accident, I ran across a tabloid article in a New York paper, written by Will Dean.

I won't bore you with all of it, for it

had to do with an attempt upon the part of society people to install radios, schools and modern homes in a lonely section of the Jersey coast.

Evidently Dean and I thought much alike, for his story started with these words. I have the article before me as I write.

"It is hard to believe that a few miles south of the great metropolis of New York, a degenerate, lost race of people exists. A people so far deteriorated and hopelessly left behind by time, that they do not know there is a war, have never seen any building larger than the shacks they live in, and are in many cases unable to talk more than a strange monkey-like gibberish which they use when conversing among themselves."

FROM that point on, the account was no more than a history of what had been done to help these heathens and how the attempt to "save" them had failed.

Will Dean, I thought, has a story to tell, but he hasn't told it here. He must have seen and guessed much from his visit to the Jackson Whites. He can't write all the truth because the public wouldn't like it. New York, perhaps the whole country, would be shamed by this open, filthy sore that exists within our country.

However, I couldn't let the thing drop. I wrote to the newspaper in question, directing my letter to Will Dean, and hoped it would reach him. Promptly, I received this reply:

Dear Mr. Francis:

You were correct in assuming that the story I have in mind and the one I wrote for the consumption of Sunday Supplement readers, are very different. I think you understand, being a fantasy writer, that there are facts that the average man refuses to "swallow."

I won't say much about the Jackson Whites here, except that according to old timers here, they were supposed to have acquired that name because of some association with Jackson who fought during the French and Indian Wars.

It seems that according to history (and there is little of it in this case) these people were the spawn of French prisons, mixed with slave labor from the southern isles, and tossed into America to fight with or against the French. God alone knows which, for I am unable to find a word about them in any published book.

Do not doubt that they exist. (*I didn't—Lucille had convinced me of that.*) Next week I leave for the marshes of Jersey. I have taken a three weeks' vacation and will "free lance" as I go among the people of the marshes and try to learn something of them. You are a stranger to me, and perhaps are not the type who cares to discard civilization and live like an animal just to satisfy some whim of curiosity. However, if you care to share expenses (and they won't amount to much) I'll share my adventure with you. Wire me if you wish to go. I will take a short trip down some night, spot a likely location to start our wanderings and be ready to leave on a three week tour of the Jackson White territory by Saturday of this week. I will receive your wire in plenty of time, and I believe that there is fair plane service between Chicago and New York if you feel the urge to come this way.

Cordially,

Will Dean.

DID I want to go? I contacted Palmer that night.

"See here, Ray," I said, "I'm going to New York."

"Stay away from those New York

editors," he warned me. "You're just a small town boy. I'd hate to see you starve down there."

I assured him hurriedly that I owed my life to him, that I wouldn't drop one word in New York and that I was after a "true" fantasy story.

"No one will believe that fantasy is true," he warned me, "but—make it good and I'll see that your kids eat while you're gone, even if you starve yourself."

Palmer knows people in the high places. Through him I managed a reservation on the plane, found that I could have a berth all the way to the big city, and even got a cab to the airport (a real accomplishment on Palmer's part, because in Chicago cabs are like cockroaches, always on the move and usually where you can't catch them).

I wired Dean that I was on my way and gave him the time of my arrival.

Without waiting for his reply, I took the plane that night. Palmer had done a nice job of fixing things for me. The ticket and the berth were ready and I settled down for a good night's sleep on the air-liner.

Then came New York—and no Will Dean.

I arrived during the early morning and Dean wasn't at LaGuardia Field.

I spent two hours wandering around the terminal waiting for Dean to show up. How I ever thought I'd recognize him, I didn't know. I'd never seen the man in my life.

After I thought for a while, I decided that I was a darn fool for coming all the way to New York when I didn't have the slightest idea what or who I was looking for.

Will Dean—a name—a man who had signed a letter.

Then I thought of his newspaper and spent two more hours trying to phone

them before anyone at the office knew who Dean was. At last I talked with Dean's boss, Bill Proust, an editor I had known quite well back in college days.

"Dean is a scrappy guy," Proust told me. "Damned near quit his job before I would give him that vacation. I can't afford to lose him, he's that good."

I asked him when he had seen Dean last.

"He left last night," he said. "Told me he'd be back today and go on his vacation Saturday. Thought he'd be in this morning. Say, why don't you come up and have breakfast with me. I eat about ten. Dean will probably show up here. Couldn't have got your wire if he was out last night."

Being a pulp writer and having the habit of waking at nine and attending Palmer's "Coffee Club" at ten, I liked the sound of coffee with Proust.

I shared a cab up-town with a couple of army lieutenants and managed to find the restaurant Proust had mentioned.

He met me, led me to a corner table and we ate. Proust had taken on six inches around the waist, was a great guy as I had remembered him, and insisted on calling the office every five minutes to see if Dean had come in.

We talked until noon, and Proust started to worry.

"That's Dean for you," he said upon returning from his tenth trip to the phone booth. "No sign of him. I called his boarding house. Landlady has your wire but he hasn't shown up to get it. I wonder . . . ?"

HE DIDN'T tell me what he was wondering about, so I suggested that we part company and I would visit my sister-in-law in Jersey. If he heard from Dean during the afternoon, he could call me. Frankly, I was pretty

sour on Dean by that time and wanted to get away from New York. Just a small town boy at heart, I was beginning to wish I'd stayed on Michigan Avenue where I belonged and made up fantasy as I went along, without any extended treks to the big city in search of the great and illusive "truth."

Proust put me on the subway and told me where to catch a boat. Two hours and fifty-four minutes later I was giving my sister-in-law, Lucille, a proper brother-in-law kiss, and telling her how I had faced the dangers of New York just because she had once written me a letter that I shouldn't have paid any attention to in the first place.

To my surprise, she was quite serious about the whole thing, and thought she could add some information to my meager collection.

"Wait a while," she said, "I'll talk to the Chief. I'd like you to see something we have upstairs."

She went whisking away down the clean, marble hall and left me standing there with mind in a turmoil and my nose full of antiseptic smell one finds in large hospitals.

In a few minutes she was back, motioning me to follow her. We took an elevator to the sixth floor and I followed her down the hall and into a room. I remember it. Room 13K it said on the door. It was neat and white inside and I noticed a child lying in the small bed, the bed clothes pulled up around her neck.

Was it a child?

I went closer, and after a long time, I looked up at Lucille who stood on the far side of the bed staring at me. She nodded her head.

"Jackson White," she said and then I knew.

This was no child at all. This creature whose dead eyes stared up at me

was a woman. Her hair was long and matted with stick-tites.

"We cleaned her up this morning," Lucille said. "The hair was hopeless."

The woman was small. I could tell by the outline under the sheets that she wasn't larger than a twelve-year-old girl. Her face was free from wrinkles and one could detect a certain degenerate beauty about it. Her eyes had been filled with animal terror and she had died with the look still in them.

"What's—happened?" I asked.

Lucille shuddered.

"I flatter myself that I'm tough," she said. "But—this. . . ."

She lifted the sheet. Then I saw what had given Lucille Forest the case of shudders. Just above the thigh, cut deep into the flesh, was a brand.

I CALL it a brand, for it had obviously been made with an instrument of some kind. It was a perfect outline of the fleur-de-lis, the French sign burned centuries ago, into the skin of French convicts who must live out their years in prison.

Lucille covered the body.

"A salesman picked her up early this morning on the edge of the swamp. It was close to the spot where we went for the picnic."

I remembered her letter.

"The salesman was driving into New York. He thought this was a child. He said he couldn't just leave the body there. We have it up here for study."

She continued in a hushed voice, "The woman seems to be approaching her thirties according to the study we made of her, *but she's carrying a doll.*"

I saw the doll for the first time. There was, in the unGodly combination of a full grown woman with a brand on her hip, and the rag doll in her arms, something that struck terror in me. It didn't make sense. It didn't

fit into any of the slick puzzles I had created for my readers.

I moved closer to the bed and saw that the doll's head was sticking from the covers.

I drew the sheet down a bit and studied the ragged, filthy object in her arms.

It was no more than a dollar variety of rag-doll common in so many nurseries. The filth of it and the way the woman had cuddled it to her gave the thing a special significance, a special meaning.

I was about to cover it again when I saw what I thought was a pencil smudge on the corner of a tiny gray-white apron tied about the doll's middle. I don't know what possessed me, but I clutched the doll suddenly and pulled it away from her.

Then I was reading the scrawl on the inner side of the tiny apron.

"Don't search for the source of the brand—the man with the claw," there followed several words that I could not read. They had evidently been obliterated by mud and water, then, the signature—"Dean."

I let it go at that and returned to New York. I contacted Proust and we had dinner together. Dean had not shown up.

Forty-eight hours passed. Will Dean did not return and no one heard a word about him.

A week—and I returned to Chicago without even visiting the strange marsh where the Jackson Whites made their home.

I was rushed to finish a novel for Palmer and he called me back on the job. I meant to write my quota, turn it in, and go back to search for Will Dean.

A MONTH passed, and then the search wasn't necessary. I heard

from Proust that Dean's body had been found, washed up by the Atlantic on the border of the Jersey marshes. A Coast Guard patrol had found the body. It was in a bad state of decomposition, but on the right elbow they could make out a strange, deeply burned scar. It looked, they said strangely like a flower. A flower with three drooping petals.

The Fleur-de-lis?

I'm not sure. I only know that I still kept the doll's apron in my desk and I took it out and read the strange message once more.

"Don't search for the source of the brand—the man with the claw—Dean."

It made no sense to me this time, nor had it before. I tried to put it aside and finish a short-short that I was working on. It was no good. I went out and got tight. Palmer tried to contact me for three days, but as he said afterward, he gave it up, "knowing your habit of hiding out in the damndest places."

I don't know myself where I went. When I returned to my office, Palmer was waiting for me. He had a thick envelope with him.

"This came yesterday," he said. "Knowing you as I do, and with your usual three-day vacation used up, I have been expecting your remains to be carted up here for the past hour. You're ready for coffee."

I thanked him for bringing up the envelope, and I guess he was curious as I about it.

It was dated three days before and posted at a small sub-station south of New York. I'll swear that envelope had been dunked in the Atlantic; dragged through every mud hole in Jersey and mailed by the dirtiest fingered gent in the coal-hauling business. It was a tough envelope. An eight by

ten, very full of pages and seemingly able to take the punishment it had been given.

I tore it open and a mess of odds and ends of paper fluttered out. Palmer and I collected them, placed them on the desk and tried to make sense of the writing.

It was evidently scrawled with a heavy black pencil and I thought the words looked familiar. I skipped back to the last page and found the signature.

"Will Dean."

No wonder I had recognized the handwriting. It was the same scrawl that had been used on the doll apron.

I think, when I had finished reading the script to Ray, that he agreed that although people might not believe all they read, at least this story, tossed up from God knows what hole in hell, was due to give them a great deal to think about.

The Story of Will Dean

I ADDRESS this to you, for although we've never met, Lee Francis is the only person who saw in my article about the Jackson Whites, an unsolved and highly complicated problem. A source of material that went beyond the fact that they were an ignorant, dying race who could not read, write, or offer anything to civilization.

You will not hear from me again, although you may read that they discovered by body on some forsaken spot. I don't know how well my body is hidden for I was not with it at the end. I had left the shell and proceeded to . . .

I cannot tell all of it on the first page. I must start at the beginning and build, step by step, to the final ending.

I left New York about four in the afternoon. It was after I was well

down the Jersey Coast that I started to wonder if this trip, taken when night was closing in, was really wise.

I pulled into a gas station south of Asbury Park and waited until the attendant had examined my coupons and given me ten gallons of gas. Then I lighted a cigarette and asked:

"How far down the coast are the Jackson Whites?"

Of course I knew. I had been down here twice before. I wanted to get the man's reactions.

There wasn't much to give him away. A little scowl when I mentioned the Jackson Whites, and some hesitation before he spoke.

"You mean the swamp people?"

I nodded, though he must have been sure who I meant.

"About twenty miles," he said. "Damned if I'd stop the car down there though," he admitted. "Them guys give me the creeps."

I chuckled.

"I'm gonna visit my uncle Fud," I said. "He's one of the little guys with the long whiskers and the loin cloths."

I stepped on the gas and rolled out toward the highway.

Through the rear view mirror I could see the bewildered attendant standing by the pump, one hand on his hip, the other holding his cap as he scratched his forehead with an index finger.

I had a purpose for coming down before my regular vacation period started. For three weeks, I planned to live with the swamp people, as one of them, and learn just what made them click.

Tonight, I wanted to find a spot where one of the settlements was located and decide upon a place where I would enter into the life of the Jackson Whites for the three-week experimental period. I also wanted to decide upon the type of dress I would need, for the idea of a loin cloth or discarded

potato sack didn't appeal to me. I wanted to look primitive and fit into the picture, but I didn't want to look any more dilapidated than necessary.

THE swamps were closing in about me. It was nearly dark. The tall marsh grass and the waving, velvet topped cat-tails were all around me. The concrete road was a single strand of civilization stretching away through a lost world of tall grass.

To the left, I could hear the sea pounding up the beach and against the sea wall. The clouds were low and scudding along with the wind. I rolled up the window and slowed the car down. It was warmer, and by driving slower, I thought I might get a better idea of the swamps.

I knew how vast the area must be, and it would do me no good to waste time along the highway. I had to find my way back to the hidden villages of the Jackson Whites and locate their hiding places in the marsh.

I parked the car in a small, rutted road that left the highway, locked it carefully and pulled my coat up around my neck. I wished I had worn something warmer, but it hadn't occurred to me that the light suit and summer hat wouldn't be sufficient for the trip.

I had gone about fifty feet into the marsh when I tripped on something and went head over apple-cart into the mud puddle I had been carefully circling. When I climbed to higher ground again, I decided that I should burn every fishnet in Jersey, for it had been a net I had fallen over. I felt that it would be no longer necessary to dress for the occasion. The heavy coat of mud I had acquired would make me look Jackson White enough to fool anyone.

I moved forward a little more cautiously now, as it was dark and I wasn't

sure how many miles of nets the swamp people had laid out to dry. After a while I noticed the fireflies dancing ahead of me in the swamp.

My eyes settled down to business and informed me that they weren't fireflies at all, but lanterns bobbing on high ground far ahead.

I went toward them, for by now it was pitch dark and I knew that it would be a simple matter to become hopelessly lost. I had walked a quarter of a mile when the earth beneath me became firm once more and I started to climb up into a little clearing surrounded by low brush and a few stunted trees.

I heard a gruff voice ahead of me, and at first thought it was speaking to me.

"Are you prepared?"

I was about to make some original crack, like:

"Not so's you'd notice it," but it wasn't necessary. A feminine voice, cultured and soft spoken, replied:

"I am. I am ready for the journey."

I froze, wondering why I hadn't been seen, wondering about the educated, clear voice in the center of the unreal world of the marshes. Then I realized that between the speakers and myself there were bushes growing in profusion. They had shielded me. I went down on my knees and crept forward.

I HAD gone half the distance to the bushes when I heard the man's voice again, low and brutal.

"Paradise Island is a long way. Do you have the courage to make the trip?"

The voice of a young girl answered: "I'm waiting to go. I've waited long. I have served my term in this—this . . ."

Her voice broke.

"Then enter and prepare," the man said.

About that time, I rose to my feet, to see a flash of light ahead of me. I saw a slim, pretty girl enter a lighted cavern. I had reached the far side of the marsh and here was a small hill where the bushes could be parted and one could enter a tunnel that led into the earth.

I waited until the light was gone and the bushes had fallen back to hide the cave. Then I went forward again, leaned close to the tunnel and listened. I could hear no more.

I had no idea what was taking place, but I had to find out. This was a new angle to my story. Something that had, seemingly, little to do with the Jackson Whites. Something that would make a real splash on the Sunday Supplement cover.

I kneeled and found that by parting the bushes, I could see into the lighted tunnel. The light was dim. At the far end, the opening widened and there was a large room. It was about sixty feet away and I could see little of it.

Should I take a chance?

Sure! I was a fool reporter. There was never a bigger damn fool when it came to running risks to get a good story. I walked calmly into the tunnel.

There was no place to hide here. If either of them came out I'd be trapped. I went along the tunnel as quietly as possible, staying close to the wall. I could hear them talking again, but the voices were not yet clear enough to understand.

Then I stood in the entrance of the room. There was a small chest near the wall, and I slipped behind it. I crouched close to the wall, hoping I hadn't been seen.

The man was across the room, his back turned on me. He wore the faded

coat of a sea captain, boots, and a rubber hat that came down about his neck to protect him against sea weather.

"The voyage has almost ended," he said. "You have served, and now you will go back and live in peace. You may enter the machine."

For the first time, I saw the "machine." It was nothing more than a facsimile of the sea chest behind which I was hidden. There were a dozen or more of them in the cavern. They stood about on the floor, some of them open, some closed.

They filled the room, and there was nothing aside from them but sand floor and a low, vaulted ceiling. The girl's face was toward me. Her eyes were wide and filled with happiness. She was dressed in a neat black dress and white frilly apron. Somehow she looked more like a maid than a character who talked riddles and wandered about the marsh.

AS I watched, she stepped into one of the open chests and sat down. Carefully she drew her skirts about her and lay on her side in the chest. The Captain's hand dropped to his side and I saw his right hand.

I caught my breath and tried to keep from crying out. This was no hand at all. It was the huge, red claw of a monster crab. It hung out of the sleeve of his sou'wester. He bent over the girl and I saw that claw move toward her.

I stood up, ready to shout at him, but there was something—perhaps the pervading spirit of the place—that forced me to remain quiet. I could see the girl. Her eyes were closed. Then the claw touched her shoulder and pinched deep into the flesh.

The girl cried out in pain. The man stepped away, dropped the cover of the chest and turned away. He sighed.

"Another gone."

"Like hell she is," I shouted and sprang toward him.

The man pivoted toward me. I thought I saw a leering, grinning face, but by that time I was close and the face was gone.

The hat and coat were empty. Where the face had been was a black cavity in the rubber clot. Then the entire outfit fell to the floor in a heap. I stopped dead in my tracks. Then I whirled toward the chest in which the girl was imprisoned. I threw open the cover, stared down into the chest and backed away, choking back a sob of hysteria and honest to God horror.

The girl in the pretty black dress was gone. In the chest was an ugly, brown skinned old hag. Her dress was black, it is true, but wrinkled and torn. It clung around her old body, hiding no bony limb from sight. Her face was creased and dirty. She was dead.

I noticed the dress torn at the shoulder.

On the taut, aged skin was a brand. A brand burned deep into the flesh. I leaned closer and saw the *fleur-de-lis*.

Somewhere I had seen or heard of that symbol before. It wasn't good.

To say that I got out of that cave in a hurry wouldn't have been an accurate description. Whatever, whoever I had seen, had vanished before my eyes. A young, attractive girl had disappeared, while in a closed chest an aged hag had taken her place.

I paused outside the cave and took a breath of fresh air. It made me feel better. I walked for several yards, then turned, deciding to take another look at the cavern in the hillside. The man with the claw hadn't tried to harm me. In fact, if I knew anything, he wasn't a man at all. He was a ghost, or a darned clever facsimile.

I kept saying to myself, "Ghosts

can't harm you—and you ought to try and find that girl."

I WAS a little selfish about the girl. She was one of the prettiest wenches I'd ever seen, barring none. I didn't like the way claw-fist had traded her off so easily for the old woman in the trunk.

I searched for the cave mouth, pushing back the bushes, trying to find my way back into the place under the hill.

Finally I gave up.

The cave had either done a fine job of disappearing entirely, or I just wasn't cut out to be a bloodhound.

I could find no trace of it, and the longer I searched, the more hopelessly lost I became. Finally I gave up. I wasn't going to find the girl, not tonight. I hoped I'd never find claw-fist. I just didn't like mixing with leering old gents who could drop out of their underwear and stage a complete disappearance.

For one night I had about enough. I turned away, picked out a star to guide me and waded back into the neck-high grass toward where the highway had a pretty good chance of being.

I had gone about fifty feet when I came out into an opening. Before me I saw a tall, very good looking young man who owned a thatch of blonde, curly hair, a breech-cloth and a wicked look in his eye.

"You've been in the cavern of corpses," he said. It was a statement, spoken softly but with a sort of "That's too bad" tone.

I didn't say anything. I just stood there looking at him.

"You know that you can't go back now?"

I shook my head.

"I don't know who you are," I said, "but you're all wrong on one thing. I can go back—and I'm going back."

You'll save yourself a lot of trouble if you get out of my way."

He smiled and flexed his muscles a little. His fists balled up in knots and the little smile vanished from his face.

"You're going to the doomed village," he said.

"To hell with the doomed village, whatever and wherever it is. I don't like Jersey and I'm going back to New York. I'm going the shortest way, right past the spot where you're standing."

He just stood there, waiting for me to try it. I was pretty sure I could, but he was young and very supple and very, very much loaded down with muscle. I took a couple of steps toward him and he frowned.

I didn't like this junior Tarzan, but I've never backed away from any man yet, so I stepped close and let him have it on the chin. Anyhow, I started one to the chin, but somewhere on the way up my fist hit something that wasn't his face. My arm was twisted rudely around and stars shot through my head. I had just time to yelp at him, and his fist caught me in the stomach and I went out like a light. You damned, low-hitting bum, I thought, and that's as far as I had time to think. After that, I saw a lot of stars that I know weren't in the sky, and I gave up.

I AWAKENED to a low, earnest mumbling of voices. Oddly enough, they seemed to be speaking mostly in French, although I recognized one English accent in the group. Gradually, as the voices became clearer, I opened my eyes. I was lying on the floor of a crude, packing box hut. Jackson White houses are crude, made of packing boxes, cardboard, anything that will hide their occupants from the sky.

I stared around me. The slim youth who had evidently dragged me here was

leaning against the door. He smiled down at me. The smile was a trifle sardonic.

"Stay here and serve as the others serve," he said. "I am ready to go back. You are not. You must live out your sentence."

Darned if I had any idea what he was talking about. In the first place, he was the second person I had seen in the last two or three hours who looked normal, yes, even handsome. Both he and the girl in the cave were very fine specimens. I may sound foolish, but there was something *clean* and sublime about them. They didn't belong to the swamp people.

I looked around at the small group that encircled me. They were leaning forward, and as I was still stretched full length on the dirt floor, I seemed to be the whole show. There were about a dozen of them. Tall and short, old crones with their skulls pressing tightly against yellow skin, men with gaunt faces and long, dirty beards. Their hands were all alike, yellow and skinny, with dirt pressed tightly under the nails. All in all, in the dreary lamplight, it wasn't a pleasant sight.

"Look here," I said to the kid who had knocked me out for the count. "You got me all wrong. . . ."

He held up his hand and I stopped talking. It wasn't doing any good.

"You suffer with the rest," he said. "I have served my term. You must serve yours. Perhaps we meet again. When we do, we will be friends."

I didn't think so. I was pretty sure that once I had a chance to get out of this mess, I wouldn't come close enough to see any of them again.

"I must go now, to the man with the claw," the kid said.

It was an odd, corny line. It wouldn't have made sense if I hadn't seen a man with a claw once tonight. Seen him

press that claw into a lovely girl's body and turn her to an old hag.

I DIDN'T have time to say anything because all the old people around me struggled to their knees and started chanting in a lot of French garble and crossing themselves. They were humming a song and it sounded lonely, like a lot of slaves locked in a slave ship, or I thought, like a lot of lost souls.

The boy faded into the night and the audience grew quiet and turned on me. They sat there and stared.

"Look," I told myself, "You got to get out of here. This is enough to drive you bats."

It took all my courage to stand up, because I thought they might pounce on me and start tearing off slices. They looked that hungry and wicked. I pushed my way out of the circle and went to the door.

I looked back. One very small man of undetermined age rose and walked toward me.

"I would not go into the swamp," he said quietly. "It is the night of transformations, and you will not be safe."

This was a crazy, meaningless speech to make, but I'd been listening and witnessing things all night that seemed crazy.

"I'm going to New York," I said stubbornly. "I've seen ghosts with claws, boys who couldn't keep their punches to themselves and a junk yard full of decayed humans. Now one of them is pleading with me in a cultured voice not to go home to mother, and it makes as much sense as Coney Island would, set up in the middle of Broadway. I'm going home."

I went.

That is, I left the hut and got my bearing by the stars. That was all right, but inside of ten minutes the stars had all disappeared and I was out

there wandering in a silent, reed-filled wilderness, lost as hopelessly as I had been earlier in the evening.

Then I met the woman with the rag doll.

It was just that simple. I thought I saw a light far ahead, and it kept blinking at me through the grass. I started to run and fell down several times trying to keep the light in sight.

At last I caught up with it and wished in a way that I hadn't. It was in a little open spot where several trees sprang from the grass and formed a little grove. In the center of the grove, the woman kneeled before the lantern.

I could hear her talking softly and somehow that warm, musical voice didn't fit the puffed lips and ugly body from which it came. The voice was sweet and her words were in French. I knew French and can even dabble around with a bit of Italian. Used to go with girls of both races and believe me, you've got to understand what a woman is talking about or you may let her talk you into something without even knowing what's going on.

SO I crouched down at the edge of the grove and watched the woman. She was short and fat and she looked like a semi-negroid savage kneeling there to worship a heathen god.

Her words were quite simple and to the point.

"You must be listening, for they said you would listen to all of us. You were bad then and we hated you, but they said you would have to listen to us. If you are listening, I have served my time and tonight is the end of my suffering. I ask for my reward. I ask for the transformation."

The wind was howling in across the swamp, and it was very cold. I drew my coat collar up around my neck. The wind wasn't coming from the sea to-

night, I told myself. It was coming straight from the caverns of hell.

Don't ask me why I say that. I'm sure of it. This wasn't New Jersey. It was—Hades.

That savage, half woman, half animal sitting there on the ground, the wind pushing against her body, her voice soft and educated and pleading.

The lantern flame quivered and went out. I heard a scuffle in the brush and a little moan. Was it a moan of fright or of ecstasy? I couldn't be sure which. I had an idea of going in there and trying to get myself killed again by playing hero for that savage.

I waited and soon a match flamed up brightly and the lantern was alive again. The wind was dying.

The lantern flame grew brighter and brighter. I gave myself away.

"Good—Lord . . ." I said aloud.

The girl in the clearing whirled around, one hand over her mouth. She uttered a little scream.

"Who . . .?"

She didn't talk French now. She spoke pure English. She wasn't like she had been either, and I was beginning to understand a lot of things that still didn't make sense, but seemed to be happening in spite of that fact.

"Don't be frightened," I begged. "I won't harm you."

She *was* frightened. She was scared stiff. I don't blame her. When the candle went out, I had seen a savage, ugly and almost naked, leaning forward over the candle. Now she had changed, as I had already seen one person change tonight, but this time for the better.

She still wore the brief clothing, but her figure had straightened and become clean and perfectly formed. Her face was beautiful. Her eyes sparkled and her whole body had life and loveliness.

As the body had changed, so had she

dropped all resemblance of a savage. She spoke softly, and she possessed enough charm to drive a man mad.

"When were you transformed?" she asked breathlessly. "I don't remember you in the other life."

I shook my head.

"This is the only life I know of," I admitted. "But, I'd like to have known you. How in heaven's name did you . . .?"

She was still puzzled, and I knew that *I* didn't fit the puzzle at all. She was expecting someone, but not me. She kept staring at me.

"You are not from the Island?"

"What island?"

SHE had me there. I was supposed to know all about the *island*, and I didn't. So far as she was concerned, if I didn't know about the *island*, I didn't have any business there.

"You must leave me," she said. There was terror in her voice. She wasn't sure of herself. Maybe, I thought, she likes my looks at least half as much as I do hers.

"Listen," I said, "I'm a New Yorker. I've been in and out of a lot of monkey business tonight and it hasn't made sense to me. If I told you what you looked like five minutes ago . . ."

Her face turned red and she looked frightened.

"You—saw . . .?"

I nodded.

"That's not all," I admitted. "I'm lost. I wandered around in this swamp and ran into more than I bargained for. I saw a girl, and a man in a raincoat with a claw. He touched her with it, and she turned into an old woman. That doesn't make sense. You don't make sense. I'm getting a headache."

"Then you are *not* from the island," she said. "You *are* from—from—somewhere—outside?"

All the time I had been talking, I was wondering what I could do or say to become her friend. I wanted her friendship more than anyone in the world. That was a devil of a place to fall in love, but I was falling so hard that I would never be able to climb back to normal.

"You tell me what you know and I'll fill in the spots that you miss," I offered. I still couldn't believe that she had actually changed from an ugly savage child to an attractive woman.

I guess I really frightened her that time.

Her face was very pale and she stared around, away through the swamp, with a panicky look in her eyes. Then her gaze went to the ground.

I looked down also. At her feet, covered with dirt and filth, was the rag doll she had been carrying when she came to the clearing.

She stooped down quickly and picked it up. She held it tightly against her and when she looked up at me again, her face was stern.

"You must leave me at once. I—I have a duty to perform. I must be alone."

I couldn't let her go as easily as that. I had to try . . .

"I'd like to help you," I said. "There's something odd about you. You've been suffering. You're going to do something foolish. I know by that look of determination in your eyes."

She was stubborn.

"You must go."

"I'm staying right here until you tell me what it's all about," I said.

I KNEW that she was having an awful fight with herself then. Whatever her plans had been, I didn't fit into them. I dared hope . . .

I saw tears spring into her eyes.

"You're spoiling everything," she said miserably. "I have waited long for my reward. I must find the cave soon—or . . ."

The cave?

Suddenly I felt all prickly and covered with cold sweat.

I had seen the cave once tonight. Had been there and seen a pretty girl branded with the claw. Seen her body, changed to something old and unclean, tossed into an ancient sea-chest.

I stepped closer to the girl and she stood her ground. Her eyes were on mine now, watching me closely like a wild, frightened thing.

"I've seen the cave," I said hoarsely. "You're not going there."

"But I must."

I grasped her suddenly, holding on, frightened that she might break away and lose herself in the swamp.

"I saw a girl die there," I said. "Saw her die horribly, by the hand of a torturer. I don't understand it all yet, but I will. Meanwhile, you're not going to die as she did. I care too much for you to see that."

As I talked, I saw first fear then amazement come into her eyes. She didn't struggle to break away from me. She knew it was useless. She was very close.

"You—don't—understand," she said wonderingly. "You aren't one of the people of the swamp. You . . ."

"I said I was from New York," I said almost gruffly. "This is the first time I've been here."

I had mentioned several times where I came from. Still, here was a girl who lived just forty miles from the city, yet to whom the word New York meant nothing.

"You don't belong with us," she said. She sounded very patient and tried hard to explain so I could understand. "We go alone for that is our destiny."

You must leave me here and never try to come back. Perhaps the leaders will let you leave peacefully. God grant that they do."

"You think you want me to go," I said, "but you're not *sure* that you do, are you?"

I felt her stiffen and try to draw away.

"*I am sure*," she said.

"I'm not."

I KISSED her on the lips, at first gently, then, because she did not resist, harder until she responded and her arms went around my neck. I'm crazy, I kept telling myself. I'm crazy as a loon. I couldn't help it. I had fallen in love with a creature of the swamp. A beautiful girl who held a dirty rag doll clasped in her arms.

After a while, I said:

"You're going back to New York with me. I'm going to get you out of this mess."

I let her go and she stood there, her eyes full of stars, her fists clenched.

"I want to go with you," she said softly. "I cannot. I have a destiny and you are not part of it."

"Then you didn't mean that kiss? You don't give a damn if I turn around and leave here without you?"

Her lips were straight and stern.

"No. You must go."

I wasn't angry at her. I was sick. Sick all the way through, because I couldn't understand, and no one, not even she, would tell me.

"Okay, if that is the way it is," I said.

I turned and went blundering off toward the marsh grass and mud pits. I had gone about twenty feet when I heard her cry out:

"No—no."

I turned and she was standing there in the coming morning, swaying a lit-

tle, her arms held out to me.

I went to her then, and I don't think even the man with the claw could have separated us then.

Yvonne—for that was her name, told me of the shipload of condemned people. You see, she took me to her hut that morning, a filthy, tiny thing where she had lived out her years in punishment.

She looked very much out of place in that sordid place. Sweet, quiet and poised, ready for what had to come, she told me of Captain Cristian and his ship.

"Many years ago, we were Frenchmen," she said. "Some of us were prisoners of France. Our crimes were not great. I was hungry in my little town of France and I stole a loaf of bread for which I went to prison for many years.

"I had been there for a short time when men came to me and told me to go to the courtyard of the prison. There were hundreds of us. Men, women and children. An officer spoke to us."

She paused, staring up at me. We sat together on the earth floor as the sun came up and the wind boomed in from the ocean. In her eyes I could see deep faith and understanding. She knew that I had to understand.

"We were told that we would go to a place called America, and if the men fought there, and the women worked there, after the war we would have our freedom. We had little choice. We all went aboard a ship."

She shuddered.

"Captain Cristian's ship," she continued. "For many days we lived as animals, locked below deck until the night the storm came and cast us ashore on Paradise Island."

NEVER have I seen a more exotic look on the face of a man or

woman. Never have I faced a person more impressed by memories.

"Paradise Island," she breathed, as though mentioning the name did something to comfort her. "You have never been to Heaven, man from New York. That was Heaven. A low, palm covered island with birds of all shades, fruits and food hanging everywhere for us to eat. No man or woman on that ship was really bad. On the island, we were calm, happy and at peace with our souls. There were others there. Good people who had been on Paradise for many years:

"We dwelt with them until one day, the Authority came."

She was staring straight through me now, at a vast, wonderful world beyond.

"The Authority was not angry at finding us there. He was a simple, kindly man with the light of Heaven in His eyes and the voice of a gentle bird. He told us that we must be banished to Hades, where we would earn the opportunity to return to Paradise Island. It would take a long time, He said, to earn what we had already tasted.

"Who could argue that? One night He asked us to board the ship and by some miracle it was able to sail. He talked with us before we sailed.

"You will suffer," He said quietly, "but you are fortunate. You have already tasted the wonders of Paradise and will dedicate your lives to the task of returning. Our Captain, Cristian is his name, will be the agent through which you return. However, Cristian is a bad man. He treated you as slaves. Therefore, through him you will return, while he, because he can never come again to this place, must remain to suffer through eternity.

"That is all."

"And, you came here?" I asked. She nodded.

I had to believe. I would have believed anything from those lips. Here, we were together, and I knew that she was trying to say that we must not remain together. That she had to return. That I must stay.

I KNEW now why the man with the claw, Captain Cristian, was thus afflicted, and I knew why the girl in the cave had become old and dead. Her youthful self had gone back to Paradise Island, because Captain Cristian had been forced to send her there. I knew what had happened to the youth who had fought me. He also was ready to return. And now—Yvonne.

"I've got to go with you," I said. "Either that, or we'll escape here and go away. Leave the swamps."

She shuddered.

"I could not escape. Perhaps—you—alone. Together we would never escape."

The sun was coming up now and the wind was dying. The swamp seemed almost normal again.

"But we've *got* to get away from here," I said. "I can lead us out of the swamp."

She shook her head.

"Then you'll go anyhow," I said firmly. "If I have to carry you. This business of Paradise Island is all right, but we're within a few miles of a civilized city. It doesn't add up. I'll . . ."

I started to stand up, but a strange dizziness hit me. I staggered and fell back. Instantly she was at my side, holding me up, talking to me in a soothing voice.

"I—I can't move," I said.

It was true. My body, from the arms down, was paralyzed. I sat there looking at her stupidly.

"*I can't move.*"

She nodded.

"I was afraid something would hap-

pen. You see, the Authority is very stern. He could not let you take me away. My place is here, and tonight, I must go to Paradise Island."

She meant it. She meant to part from me, because it was necessary that she do that or sacrifice my life.

"Then by all the Powers that be," I said stubbornly, "I'll go with you to Paradise Island if I have to swim all the way."

That was a very long day. I asked Yvonne to find writing material for me. In my pocket I had a pencil. She searched in a box in the corner and brought paper and I spent the day writing this account. I wrote it for one man who had wanted to come here with me, and who I must warn against ever entering the swamp. That man will have a story that could never be bettered, for it is horrible and yet it was the truth.

I wrote when my arms were free and the remainder of my body was stiff and paralyzed. At last night came again and in the darkness I relaxed and I could move about freely again.

Then, arm in arm, we went to search for Captain Cristian and plead my case before him.

We stood in the glow of the cave, staring around us at the old, closed chests and the worn floor where so many footsteps had pressed into the sand and so many more would come. We were alone together, her hand pressed into mine, waiting.

I knew that Yvonne was frightened. Frightened for me, for she knew that I had little chance of following her.

FROM where Captain Cristian came, I do not know. He seemed to materialize from somewhere behind us. Perhaps he entered the cave silently, for he was there, staring at me, his body (or was it a body) hidden under

the rubber coat and the boots and hood.

"There are two of you. One does not belong here," he said. His voice was cold and hollow. It held no pity or depth.

Yvonne started to shiver and her hand in mine grew cold.

"Captain Cristian," she said in a weak voice, "I am ready to return, but I have fallen in love. With your permission, I would remain."

His voice held no emotion.

"You cannot remain. He cannot go. The Authority would not allow it."

"But . . . ?"

Suddenly he was angry. Angry, and I thought, perhaps a little frightened.

"I am no fool," he snapped. "Do you think I would remain here if I had the power to choose those who go back? Do you think I enjoy this? Do you think I am happy with *this*?"

This was the terrible claw of a hand that he stretched out now for her to see. She pressed close to me, trying not to look.

"I am to suffer forever because I made others suffer," he said. His voice was quite humble now. "You are a little fool. Would that I could go in your place. You cannot stay here without living in misery. You cannot take a person of this place back with you. Is that clear?"

It was horribly clear. I had not said a word. I was thinking of Yvonne. Thinking that she would remain earth bound and go on suffering just to be with me. I had been a fool to think it would work. A fool to make her die here when she could go back to her beloved Paradise Island.

"Yvonne," I said, "You've got to go back."

She stared up at me, her eyes moist.

"Without you?"

I nodded, unable to speak.

Suddenly she was in my arms, her

whole body shaking, her cheek pressed to mine.

"The time is short," Captain Cristian said suddenly: "There are many others tonight."

I pushed her away from me.

"Yvonne—if the place where you go is truly Paradise Island, we'll not remain separated long. If I promise you that, will you go?"

She nodded, unable to speak to me.

"Then do as I say," I pleaded. "Go back to Paradise Island and wait for me. I have never harmed anyone nor committed a crime. I will come to you when I can."

I could have sworn that the look on Captain Cristian's face softened a bit as I spoke.

Then without looking again at him, I kissed her tenderly. I turned away and went swiftly from the cave.

I WAS half crazy then, or I might have known that she would never leave me. I had stumbled a hundred feet into the swamp when I heard her cry out and knew that she was following.

Like a fool I tried to escape. I thought that if she could not find me she would go back.

Then there were three of us in the swamp, for I heard Captain Cristian cry out behind her.

"Come back here. You cannot escape. It is my duty . . ."

I started to run, head down, blindly.

My feet caught on a hidden root and I fell face down in the mud. I guess my head must have hit a half buried stone.

I awakened and the sun was high over the swamp. I had a terrible headache. I sat up and wiped the mud from my face. The things that happened last night came back to me slowly. Memories made me want to die. I wondered where Yvonne had gone. I was sure

that she had not escaped the Captain. I was sure that she had left me, until I could once more join her in death.

It isn't a pleasant thing, even to write about.

I found Yvonne—or what had been Yvonne—lying in a ditch near the road. Her body was changed and the soul had gone from it. I saw only the savage child of the Jersey swamps, ugly and showing the signs of all her suffering here, and in her arm she clutched the rag doll.

I felt no emotion after that, for I knew that this was not Yvonne at all, but the ugly husk of what she had been forced to suffer. Yvonne—*my* Yvonne, was waiting for me on Paradise Island.

So that Lee Francis would know, if he came this way, I picked up the doll and found a clean place on the under side of the tiny apron. With the pencil I had used yesterday, I wrote:

"Don't search for the source of the brand. You will never understand, nor will you, I hope, ever meet the man with the claw. I am happy and safe and will try to explain later . . . before. . . ."

I broke off there, because I had no more to write. I was going to add, 'before I follow Yvonne to Paradise Island.'

That wasn't important anyhow. All I wanted to do was to save Francis the trouble of searching for something he could never find or understand.

I guess the note was foolish. The chances against him ever seeing it were very slim, and to others, it wouldn't even make sense.

I COULD do nothing for the ugly corpse in the ditch, yet I remembered that this savage body had held the soul of Yvonne for many years, and I placed the doll back in its arms and folded the rough fingers around it ten-

derly.

I followed the road and passed the place where my car was parked. I would never use it again. Two miles along the road, partly hidden by the morning mist, I found a small town. I still had a partly finished account in my pocket. The papers I had written on so carefully yesterday, with Yvonne at my side. I knew it would not be hard to get to Yvonne. I wanted it so badly that no one, not even doomed Captain Cristian, could keep me away.

I found a quiet place in the village post office and continued writing until I had recorded all the story that I could ever hope to write.

Then I sealed it carefully and mailed it to Francis in Chicago.

Author's note:

When I had finished reading Dean's story, I sat quietly for a long time, sipping coffee and staring at Palmer. There was a half smile playing over his lips but his eyes were thoughtful.

"Fantasy hits pretty hard sometimes, doesn't it?" he said.

I nodded.

"Do you believe it?" he asked.

I nodded again.

"I do," I said. "I can't believe anything else. That's one story that no one but Will Dean could write. It's a *real* Sunday feature, and his last."

"And you're sure of that?" he stood up and searched for money to pay for the coffee.

"I'm sure that Will Dean found Paradise Island and his Yvonne," I said. "Because, when they found his body in the sea, they found the brand of Captain Cristian on Will Dean's elbow. The Captain relented and sent Dean where he truly deserved to go."

Palmer chuckled, that dry, sardonic chuckle that is his alone.

"I'd hate to tell the people of America that to many this place is only Hell. A place where lost souls are sent to suffer and repent, in the Hades of a forgotten swamp. I suspect that there are many Hells in this country, and many people suffering the fate of Yvonne, where only death can release them from their slums and their forgotten swamps."

I'm afraid that he presented some rather interesting and unpleasant food for thought.

★ THE GREATEST MACHINE ★

By ARNOLD M. SMITH

OF ALL the thousands of inventions that have appeared since Man first began to use his hands in conjunction with his head, none is more important than a certain machine. While it is true that many simpler machines had to precede this device, it has now assumed the place of first importance in our civilization. No single other gadget can claim this distinction. It will have the greatest effect on humankind in the future. It will be more important to man than anything except moral decency. It will—as it has already—change civilization so that it will be unrecognizable.

After a build-up like that the nature of the thing should be pretty obvious—it is the *vacuum tube*! Some might object to the use of the word "machine" in conjunction with a silent glass tube.

It is perfectly correct. It is a machine in the same sense that a transformer is a machine and it is almost as efficient as that most efficient of all machines.

There are no moving parts in an electronic vacuum tube—except electrons and their mass is slight. Consequently it is efficient. In radio, television, radar, motion pictures, and instruments, we have the barest suggestion of what this device portends for the future. An electronic vacuum tube in the form of an amplifying device, in the form of a photo-electric cell, or in any one of innumerable applications, can almost duplicate the workings of a human. It is the basic form of the robot. Already, it is applied to robotic machines in the form of gyro-pilots, automatic controls for industrial processes, chemical analysis—

an infinite number of things. It can multiply any forces we may wish to use by the expedient of making it an amplifier. It is an extension of our hands.

The essence of the thing is that the electron tube can do anything a human being can do and do it better, faster and more accurately. Of course its scope is limited, but this is only a matter of technology. As time goes on it will be possible to combine simple elements such as amplifiers and photo-electric cells in such combinations and such complexities as to permit the creation of robots, which, though bearing no resemblance to human beings exteriorly, will still perform all their functions except thinking creatively. It is unlikely that a machine can be made to do that.

IF SOME of our industries are examined—petroleum cracking for example—or atomic bomb manufacture for another—it will be found that these industries consist largely of huge plants controlled by a few men, armed with a multiplicity of electronic instruments. This tendency is increasing. In a recent *Fortune* magazine, the application of this power was spoken of highly. It was suggested that the trend at present is to relegate fewer and fewer duties to men in factories and to trust it more and more to automatic or semi-automatic machines. Men are limited to either feeding materials to the machines or watch-

ing dials on instruments to see that machines are functioning correctly. After a time it is not impossible that factories will be completely automatic—controlled by men remote from their charges.

How is this possible? In a little glass envelope from which the air has been removed, are a few pieces of metal. One of the pieces of metal gives off electrons because it is heated by an electric current. These electrons are attracted to a positively charged sheet of metal near the first piece, but before reaching it they (the electrons) are forced to pass through another grid of metal. In the act of passing through this grid they are modulated or controlled in quantity by another electric charge on this grid. It is absurdly simple—the key to the whole thing is that little changes on the grid cause big ones on the plate—either in current or voltage. Nearly every mechanical reaction can be changed to a corresponding synchronous electrical one. Thus it is a simple matter to use this tube—a plain three-electrode tube—to do the controlling. The power comes from the original electrical generator.

There are no limits to this control-thing. And each day more and more applications are found for these things, until it seems, as will occur eventually—all men will be surrounded by vast numbers of slaves in the form of glass and metal tubes powered by electricity.

THE END

★ TEACHERS OF TIBET ★

By C. D. DOWLING

ON THE plateaus high among the perches of the Himalayas stand the monasteries of an ancient and fruitful secluded civilization. Because of the location and the meager communication with it the life of the lamaseries is even more mysterious to the outside world.

One studying Lamaism would find it to be a combination of Buddhism and Shamanism. Basically, it is Buddhistic due to its adherence to the theory of reincarnation but derives its side of spirit worship from Shamanism.

The life of the lama is one of rigid discipline, mortification and strict asceticism. His life is devoted to the study of his worship and to the metaphysical problems which have confronted man for countless centuries. Only through profound knowledge and promise of increased sanctity can a novice be elevated to the higher orders of priest, mendicant and teacher. Much of his daily routine is devoted to extended periods of profound thought and contemplation of the mysteries of life.

The community is ruled by a head priest, the Dalai-lama or "Grand Lama," who in most instances carries on the little communication with

the outside world. The latest record of a visit of a lama with anyone of the outside world was the meeting of the Grand Lama and the Prince of Wales in Calcutta in 1906.

Highly religious is the practice of having a member of the lamasery present when a native is about to die, the belief being that such a holy man will guide the spirit of the departing soul into the body of another living person. A further extension of this practice occurs at the death of the Dalai-Lama. When certain that the death of the Laman Pope is imminent the clergy immediately set out in search of women about to give birth in the immediate future. When death finally comes to the Lama the male child born at the closest moment to the death of the high priest is chosen as his successor.

Although believed to be independent, the country of the lamas is somewhat subjected to the rule of China. The only recorded official function attributed to the lamas was their treaty with the British after the expedition of 1904, but this was regarded mainly as a gesture of courtesy.

THE END

PROOF OF THE SHAVER MYSTERY

(Continued from page 7)

the amount of living matter on earth.

Proof of the existence of Carbon 14 in living matter was made from bio-methane, a gas produced from sewage from the disposal plant of the city of Baltimore. The Houdry scientists separated the various isotopic forms of carbon from the methane in their isotopic plants near Marcus Hook. The Chicago group measured the activity of the Carbon 14 so obtained, and established it to be 10.5 disintegrations per minute per gram. The radiation, the university scientists found, was identical with that produced by Carbon 14 from the piles.

Wood charcoal and beeswax, examined in recent experiments, likewise show the same radioactivity found in the Baltimore sewage. Ten disintegrations per minute per gram were established in the charcoal and beeswax.

As a check to their study, the scientists separated all the isotopes of carbon from the methane produced by petroleum-petromethane. No "cosmic carbon" was found in petromethane, for the petroleum, lying deep in the earth for millions of years, had lost the Carbon 14 which it had originally acquired from the organic life by which it was formed.

Others cooperating in the experiments include: George E. Finck and R. J. Trautman of the department of public works of Baltimore, Dr. Abel Wolman of Johns Hopkins, the Sun Oil Company, which made available its thermal diffusion columns, W. H. Johnston of the Institute, who assisted in the counting measurements, and J. Dooley of Houdry Laboratory.

Quote From Science News Letter

YOU HAVE radioactive carbon in you. You will continue to have it even after you die, and if there is anything left of your remains 5,000 years from now, the radiocarbon in them will still be able to make a Geiger counter tick.

Editor's Summary

HERE, THEN, we have Mr. Shaver's radioactive theory of infection of the living being confirmed in all details. It *can* be detected with a Geiger counter. It comes from the bombardment of our upper atmosphere (and also the earth's surface itself) with cosmic rays. These rays, Shaver has informed us, are his "exd" or the disintegrated particles of suns. These particles are radioactive on an infective scale almost unimaginable. It has also been discovered that cosmic rays, impinging on lead, are made much more potent, and lead is no safeguard against them. Rats placed under lead plates developed cancer much more rapidly and violently than rats left "unprotected" by the lead plates. Still another

discovery, made in New York's subways, shows that cosmic ray activity increases at greater depths, thereby proving Shaver's critics of his theory wrong when they pointed out to him that his cavern people ought to be immune from death by reason of their great depth in the earth. These critics claimed Shaver's theory fell apart there, because he insisted the cave beings lived even shorter lives than we, and were more infected with "de" than we, and only lived longer because of the medical ben ray machines they used.

So we DO have radioactives in us, especially carbon, and the so-called inert elements *can* become radioactive, and they *do* get that way from infection from outer space, and they DO cause the symptoms of age, and they *cannot* be gotten rid of by ordinary means, and their effects last more than 5,000 years! And there you have POSITIVE PROOF. Shaver told the truth, 100%, there.

Mr. Shaver's Second Claim

SPACE IS FILLED with the ex-disintegration of suns, that is, the disintegrated particles of suns, which have been atomically disrupted. These particles are infinitely smaller than atoms, and even than electrons and protons. These particles, nearing matter, or neared by matter, tend to condense just as salt condenses out of a saturated solution when an additional grain is dropped in, precipitating itself around the grain until all is crystallized again. Thus, all matter is constantly growing, adding to itself, by the influx of exd. The exd is again becoming normal matter. Most of this exd is beneficial, and clean, but some of it is de, or radioactive, being the disrupted particles of radium, etc. Science would call them gamma rays.

Science's Confirmation

THE DISCOVERY OF a whole new range of sub-atomic particles which are said to be 1850 times smaller than the electrons, protons, etc., that we are familiar with. They have been termed (tentatively) positrinos, neutrinos, etc.

We will not quote all the authority on this, because it is too lengthy and technical. But any reader who is interested can read all about it in papers released by the AAAS and in *Science News Letter* editions for December, 1947.

Editor's Summary

HERE IS THE second proof that Shaver's science, as gotten from his "caves" is true, and far ahead of modern scientific advancement. These "exd" particles are now known to exist. They are identical, except as to size, to ordinary atomic particles.

Conceivably, here is Shaver's ben machine near reality. If these particles can be directed on ordinary matter, they would possibly unite with it and strengthen it basically, making it more "solid" just as Shaver has said it is used to "harden" the cavern walls against collapse by pressure. The interstices between matter made up of these tiny particles, 1850 times smaller than ordinary atomic particles, would be almost non-existent, producing a matter impermeable, and of terrific strength.

It is also quite possible that a whole range of matter could be built up which would be similar to ordinary matter, except that it would be more rarified. Conceive of a piece of iron made up of electrinos and protinos, etc., but with the same space occupied. That piece of iron would be 1850 times less dense than an ordinary piece of iron, and you might even find it nothing but an invisible, but rigid, gas, through which you could pass your hand with no apparent resistance.

Conceive of rock inside the earth made of such particles. A "ray" could pass through *miles* of such rock as easily as through empty space, so, it is at least possible that Shaver's account of ray warfare through solid rock is not beyond the range of practical scientific possibility, now that it is a fact that such extremely small particles of matter do exist, and can be made up into ordinary material forms.

A New German Proof

ON JULY 31, 1946, Dr. Hermann Fricke, Oberregierungsrat i. R., Berlin—Charlottenburg, Nussbaumallee 23, announced his "discovery" of the "Entdeckung des Aetherwindes." While this "discovery of the ether drift" does not prove Mr. Shaver, it does prove Mr. Roger P. Graham's "ether drift" discovery to be well-supported by accredited scientists. If the reader will remember, we said that the "ether drift" theory was Shaver's "exd" influx in more scientific terms. The reader will also remember that actual tests performed by Mr. Graham and your editor, showed a "drift" displacement of easily recognizable and defined proportion. Also, that the test should be performed on a gigantic scale in shafts in the earth, exhausted of all air. This would be terrifically expensive, but until it is done, the ether drift theory cannot be cast aside. The "disproof," which is science's best means of learning things positively, needs to be applied. If the major test failed, that disproof would be factual.

Dr. Fricke, for our reader's information, is the one who, in 1932-4 predicted the "x-effect" of the Earth's atmosphere, which is the high-altitude hot layer recently discovered and measured by means of V-2 rockets. So, you can see that he is a man of no mean ability. He is recognized as one of Germany's best physicists, and is at present working under Allied Military Government leadership. Dr. Fricke was once chief adviser to the Kaiser's government. He is now 71 years old.

Briefly, Dr. Fricke describes evidence which shows there is an "ether-wind" blowing in to-

ward the Earth's surface, and that this ether-wind also encircles the sun, and is a part of its "field." The field is magnetic in nature, as we define magnetism.

Confirmation of Dr. Fricke

IN THE DECEMBER 20, 1947, issue of *Science News Letter* appears the following: "Strong Magnetic Fields, Observed For The First Time In Stars Other Than The Sun, May Hold The Key To The Speed Of Their Rotation." The article goes on to say: "The key to the speed with which distant stars are whirling may lie in the strength of their magnetic fields. Stars possessing strong magnetic fields are rotating rapidly, the research of Dr. Horace Babcock of Mount Wilson Observatory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington indicates. For years scientists have been searching for a clue that would show them how fast a far-off star, with its axis pointed toward the earth, is twirling. . . . It may point the way to more complete theories on how planetary systems are born."

Editorial Comment

RECENTLY, astronomers have observed secondary concentrations in nebula, showing that planetary systems can coalesce from them, thus disproving the theory that it is necessary for a star to be in collision, or near-collision with another to form planets. The new discovery postulates that the presence of planetary systems around stars may be the rule rather than the exception. Now we have science saying Shaver's multi-populated universe can logically be true, reversing its stand that the chances are billions to one against it. Recently, also, it has been discovered that there are dark bodies in space, and once more Shaver's "dark worlds" are rendered credible.

Mr. Shaver's Third Claim

THERE ARE interplanetary and interstellar ships visiting the earth regularly, making contact, dealing with the cave people, engaging in battles, etc. That these ships have unlimited power, tremendous speed, and are in a variety of shapes, including huge disks and globes, cones, pyramids, torpedoes.

The Flying Saucers

WE WILL SAY nothing on this subject that we have not already said, except to point out that this month, in *Fate* magazine, Kenneth Arnold and its editorial staff have presented a complete summary of the flying disk mystery, and have presented positive proof, including photographs. The Earth IS being visited by gigantic craft up to a half-mile in diameter, and they have been seen by thousands of reputable people, have been photographed, and are a source of great concern to our military, who are investigating every report. The recent death of a National Guard pilot,

(Concluded on page 176)



The CLUB HOUSE

Where science fiction fan clubs get together.

Conducted by ROG PHILLIPS

SPRIG beyid id da air, we are id ad eggs-padsive mood—I bead bood. So gather 'round and listen. This column is going to conduct a prize contest, as we said before. There will be a first prize of fifty dollars, second is twenty-five dollars, and the ten runner ups will each receive a paid subscription to AMAZING STORIES for one year. The contest begins June 1, 1948 and ends June 1, 1949 provided there IS a June 1, 1949.

The prizes will be awarded for the twelve best letters, articles, or stories appearing in the pages of the various fanzines between those dates, written by anybody except the editor of the fanzine. The editor of any fanzine will have to get his entry printed in some other zine than his own.

Each fanzine, in order to be eligible for the prizes, must have its readers vote for the best in that fanzine during that period. If that editor offers prizes in his own elimination contest that is strictly HIS affair. The prize winner or item voted first by his readers must then be sent to this department.

Now I'm stuck! There will probably be too many to run in this department so the readers can judge them without it consuming at least ten years. (I hope there are that many winners of the preliminaries.) It may be that some fan editor will be good enough to volunteer to put them all into one issue of his fanzine and sell it for what it costs to put it out. That would be the best solution to the problem of getting the entries to the fanzine readers for voting. Or maybe we can get half a dozen fan editors as judges and send the bunch to each of them successively and let them vote for the winners of the finals and take the majority ruling.

Anyway, that problem will be solved satisfactorily and the prizes awarded not later than October 1, 1949.

The subtle and diabolical plot underlying this contest is of course to entice you readers into the mad whirl of fandom from which there is no escape. (But who wants to escape?) In order to get in the contest you must subscribe to at least one fanzine. Once you subscribe to a fanzine your writing finger will start itching, and once you scratch it with a pen you are an actifan.

Being a direct descendent of Buddha on my

mother's half-brother's side of the family I am naturally all-wise, and being all-wise, I realize that you readers can put up with only so much of me. The solution to this problem struck me like a bolt from the blue! Why not have guest editorials by fan editors?

This department is sort of a fanzine within a prozine, so why not? I sent out two or three explorative invitations to write guest editorials. The first one came in from Rex Ward. He says in the letter that accompanied it, "I think you've got a wonderful idea in running guest editorials. Even if perhaps some of the things said are repetitious of what you have already said, the readers will be glad to hear it from the pen of a real fan, himself."

Rex is publisher and co-editor of the most popular letterzine in fandom today. *Fandom Speaks* comes out once a month. Rex goes to school and also keeps up on fanactivities and publishes his zine regularly, so he is kept busy. They say if you want something done ask a busy man. Well, I asked Rex for a guest editorial, and here it is!

GUEST EDITORIAL

The Fan's Life

PUBLISHING a fan magazine is great fun; it's probably the high spot in any fan's career. In most cases, the editor loses money on an issue, but the enjoyment he gains more than makes up for that. Sometimes the process entails a lot of steady work, and occasionally it becomes a *task*, often even drudgery—yet in the face of all that, it's hard for a fan editor to give up publishing his magazine. He becomes actually *attached* to it, though it may sound odd.

I speak from experience, being the publisher and co-editor of FANDOM SPEAKS, a fan publication devoted entirely to the printing of letters from other science-fiction enthusiasts. In this fanzine's pages, you'll find a galaxy of subjects undergoing stiff discussion, being torn to pieces sensibly and logically.

The *general* fanzine is one which contains a little bit of everything: stories, poems, letters, articles, and departments. There are other types

of specialized fan magazines however—the *news-zines*, which dish out the latest news of happenings to fans, their magazines, and related subjects; and the fanzine which is devoted to illustrations of interest to the fantasy fan. It is surprising to note the marvelous ability some of the fan artists possess. And the fanmags which present to fandom sales of books, want lists of the same, and such. Ads of all sorts may be found in these specialized magazines, and they probably do the biggest service to fandom, of all the various types of fanzines.

Yes, there is hardly a thing you could think of that isn't represented in some manner in a fan magazine of some sort. The editors are kept pretty busy with their magazines, but even so, they somehow find time to indulge in the many other fan activities which they have at their disposal.

Which brings up the main point of this editorial: What do fans do in their spare time?

Collecting is a widely enjoyed part of this hobby, which is more accurately a little world within a world. Few fans can pass up a second-hand magazine shop, and few deny that digging around in a pile of ancient science-fantasy magazines is an enjoyment hard to surpass. It is the desire of every fantasy fan to have a complete collection of magazines in his possession. But a fan who *does* have is a rare one indeed, and can well be proud of the fact. Collecting often proves to be expensive, but still it is enjoyed by practically every true fan.

Fan gatherings, locally and nationally, are held often, and attended by both old fans and new. In the local get-togethers, friendly discussions of the latest fanmags and promags prevail; in the larger meetings, the *national* ones, to which fans from the country over come, more elaborate things are done: games are played, movies are shown, masquerade balls are held, refreshments are served, and well-known celebrities, scientists, and professional editors are called upon to speak before the gallery of interested and enthusiastic fans. Beautiful original drawings of professional magazines are auctioned off, among many other things. These national conventions are held once a year, and every fan looks forward to them with eagerness. They are acclaimed as one of the most enjoyed activities of any fan, and well may they be.

Correspondence with fellow fantasy friends via the mails is perhaps the most practiced of all activities. It is impossible to describe the fun and enjoyment one can find in writing letters to other people interested in the same type of literature. Some of the greatest of friendships are made by this method; one may correspond with another for years, never seeing him, and when at one of the national conventions the two fans meet, they feel as if they've known each other all of their lives! Not only science-fictional subjects are discussed in these letters; after a few are exchanged, the correspondent begins to see what other things his

unseen friend is interested in, and the chances are that he, too, is interested in them! Then each can go ahead and talk all they wish about anything they wish, and be assured of favorable response from the other party! Music, moving pictures, sports, all these and many other things are discussed. Anybody can correspond, and everyone who does is sure to find some special person he can confide in, and talk with confidentially. In this manner, the strongest of friendships are made, and *kept!*

Many of the more serious-minded fans enter heavier subjects. Some are noted scientists, and they constantly work to bring about the seemingly fantastic things we read of in our fantasy magazines, or to perfect that which already is.

Others make a hobby of collecting fantastic or weird music. This is a most fascinating subject, because to some a piece of music may sound fantastic while at the same time to someone else it may not! Often, fans get into friendly arguments over whether or not a song is fantastic, and usually they reach no agreement. Whether a song is fantastic or not lies in its *interpretation*. Some may be able to close their eyes and envision a rocket ship blasting off toward infinity in a blaze of exhaust fire, while others interpret it differently entirely, and see nothing even vaguely fantastic. This is a sub-hobby which isn't shared by very many fans, but those who do enjoy themselves immensely.

There are numerous other side-lights of the fan field, too many of them to mention. These are the chief ones, the ones practiced by the majority of fans. Although it may seem impossible to do one's daily work and yet take part in all these things, the fan actually does it, and has a wonderful time doing it.

So you can see, the fan's life is a full one, and certainly an interesting one. If you, the reader, are a fan, you know the truth in that statement. If you aren't—well, there's no reason to waste another minute. It costs nothing to be a part of this wonderful organization, and I can't think of anything more enjoyable.

So subscribe to fanzines, write letters to fellow fan enthusiasts—get in the swing! And enjoy to the utmost the many activities open to you.

Rex Ward

5 January 1948

* * *

AN ANNOUNCEMENT came in that a new zine called *LOKI* is to begin publication. It will be by Gerry de la Ree, 9 Bogart Place, Westwood, N. J., and Genevieve K. Stephens, Rt. 5, St. Johns, Mich., "tentatively slated to consist of 20 mimeo pages per issue on a bi-monthly basis, limited to short prose and poetry of a wierd, fantastic, or stf nature." Gerry asks for reader contributions of that nature. Here's your chance to get into that contest and maybe win the fifty dollar prize! Funny thing,—he doesn't want to charge for subscription. Says that way he can quit doing it when he wants to.

Gerry is connected with a newspaper in New Jersey, and has been publisher of fanzines before. *SUN SPOTS* is one of his past fanzines. It came out printed and then mimeo, expertly done.

He also has a few copies left for sale of a real collector's item. *AFTER TEN YEARS*, A Tribute to Stanley G. Weinbaum, 1902-1935: 50c; published by Gerry de la Ree, and put together by him and Sam Moskowitz, co-editor of *FANTASY-TIMES*; containing eight brief word pictures of this famous sf author by people who knew him, including his sisters and an autobiographical sketch by Stan himself. One of the brief word pictures of Stan is *A TRIBUTE*, by Ray Palmer, who knew him well. Others by Ralph Milne Farley, Julius Schwartz, and Sam Moskowitz. Also two by Stan's sisters, Margaret and Helen. A list of Weinbaum's published works is at the end.

Gerry sends a postcard comment on the first issue of the CH which should be printed in full. Here it is.

Dear Rog:

Enjoyed first installment of "The Club House" in AS. I think you summed up fandom pretty well and gave the non-fans a favorable viewpoint. I'm sure that if your column continues it will be a boost for both fandom and AS. Only serious error I noted was your statement about the NFFF holding an annual convention. Fandom in general runs the convention and many fans do not belong to NFFF. Each year a different group does the work, such as the Philly fans' last year, the Los Angeles bunch in '46, etc. This year it's Toronto, Canada. Liked your fanzine reviews.

Sincerely, Gerry

O.K., Gerry. Here's hoping you success on your new fanzine. Don't forget, people—the quickest way to get him out of the fan publishing idea is for about six hundred of you to drop him a card asking for his fanzine with none of you even enclosing a stamp to pay for sending it.

WILD HAIR: the hirsute fanzine; no. 1—FAPA; \$10 each (I think they mean a dime!), 2/15c. But there are ten dollars worth of laughs in it. This is put out by Ashley, Burbee, Condra, Laney, and Rotsler at 1057 S. Normandie Ave., Los Angeles 6, Cal., *The Variable Existence of Hyperfan*, by Charles Burbee, is something I would like to reprint in the CH for all of you to read. (Maybe I will. How about it, Burbee?) Or maybe *The Rise and Fall of the Fannish Empire* in the same zine? At the bottom of page 2 of *WILD HAIR* it says, "If by some chance you people love this thing you might write and say so, and it is possible your ego-boo will cause these 4½ fine minds to convene once again and go through the whole boisterous, mad, mad routine all over again." Let's see—Ashley is known as "Two Brain." That leaves 2½ brains for the other four. O.K., readers. Buy their zine and then send them a piece of your mind. They seem to need it! Seriously, it's GREAT!

FANDOM SPEAKS #5 is a surprise Christmas

issue, too late for the deadline on last month. It's an extra January issue. #4 came out ahead of time. Both are full of interesting discussion and controversy ranging from race-prejudice—AH, race prejudice! This is a good chance to air my views on that subject. Now, I have known a good many colored people, Jews, Hindus, and white people, and this is what I think: (250,000,000 words deleted here for lack of space. This opus will appear as a five foot shelf of books in the near future and should settle the whole controversy for all time)—to—no, I can't mention that subject. Well—to, no I can't mention that either. Guess you'd better subscribe to it.

Rex Ward who prints FS was in bed with pneumonia or close to it the first part of January. I wrote him and told about when I had pneumonia myself. This cheered him so much he is up and about again, putting together FS #6. Jack Clements, his partner in publishing FS is a master at satire and humor. He has a regular column in *Spacewarp*.

SPACEWARP: Jan. 48; Jack Clements announces two things of major importance to fandom. (1) His candidacy for President of the United States (where's that?). (2) His resignation from the human race. (How did he get to join in the first place?)

A poem by Rapp, its editor, entitled, *The Watchers*, illustrated by Stein is very nice, though personally I don't take to poetry. (How's that? *The Last Man*? You think it was great—that poem in *SO SHALL YE REAP*? Gee! I'll write some more then!)

A regular feature in *Spacewarp* lately is a section on mathematical paradoxes. Hmmm. If I dood it I get a lickin'.

FANTASY-TIMES: a very satisfactory number from every standpoint, the January issue. The *Cosmic Reporter*, a dept. by Lane Stannard keeps up with the latest news in fandom and of interest to fandom. *The World of Tomorrow Today*, by Ray Van Houten discusses interesting present developments in science which point to the future trends of seeming significance. Jet propelled torpedoes, a new drug called benzyl cinnamate for deafness, blindness, etc., and lack of mutation at Bikini, are the current topics. The *Fantasy Clubs* is a department devoted to reports from any fan organizations that want to report. *Fantasy in the Theatre* is interesting as usual, written by David Kishi. The issue concludes with the *Fantasy Corner*, a readers' column. F-T is kept on a high level and fills a real need for serious fans.

FANTASY-COMMENTATOR: Winter 1948. Part 10 of the *Immortal Storm*, a history of fandom by Sam Moskowitz, occupies thirteen pages of this issue and is to be continued. A *Wine of Wizardry* is a four page long poem with four full page illustrations. Book reviews and other items fill the remainder of the zine. You have to be good to get something published in F-C, and if you think you're good by all means submit something. No fiction. Descriptive and critical

manuscripts dealing with any phase of imaginative literature are welcomed from all readers of F-C.

IF!: January. A pocket size fanzine. Vol. 1, No. 1. 24 pages with contributions from such well-knowns as Don Wilson, Joe Kennedy, Lin Carter, and Norm Storer. Conrad Pederson and John Rumery put it out. It's to be published bi-monthly or irregularly. The Man in Grey, a short fantasy by Pederson is a very good fantasy. Let's hope you put it out regularly, Pete.

That's all the fanzines on hand right now (Jan. 17th). A couple fellows want to get acquainted with fans in their hometowns. Or if you like to write, send them a letter. One is Vince Desta, 128 Hinman Ave., Waukesha, Wis. If you don't get any response, Vince, subscribe to some fanzine. That way you'll get plenty of pen pals and lots of action.

James W. Cooper, 3304 Cedarbrook Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, also wants to know if there are any fans near him interested in having get-togethers.

Go to it, boys. I would like to see a lot of fan clubs spring up all over the country. Then when I run for President in 1952—it would be simple to inaugurate a PAG in fandom. Ug—why don't one of you fanzine editors put President Truman on your free list. After all, Roosevelt was a detective story hound, wasn't he?

Martin Carlson, Sec-treas. of NFFF sent me a raft of material on NFFF, too late for use in the last issue, but I will use it as I go along. Thanks Mr. Carlson. He informs me that the membership list of NFFF is 216 at present. It only costs a dollar to join. When you join you get lots of benefits, such as letterheads with the NFFF coat of arms. It's really nice.

Back to race prejudice—being a Titan, I am of course superior to a human being, and can therefore look at the problem from a strictly unbiased viewpoint. I think all of you will agree emphatically with my conclusions on the matter; that the fanrace is superior to all other races, and that it is its bounden duty to conquer and subdue the rest of the world until all races and nationalities are ardent actifans. So if you, gentle reader (how'd that creep in?), are not yet an

actifan, don't let your inferiority complex pester you; subscribe to some fanzine and join the rest of the frogs in the pond. We all have to croak some day. Why not now?

Fancercely, ROG PHILLIPS

DREAM QUEST: 10c, 13/\$1.00; Don Wilson; 495 N. 3rd St., Banning, Cal.

FANDOM SPEAKS: 10c, 12/\$1.00; Rex Ward; 428 Main St., El Segundo, Cal.

FANEWS: 3c per sheet, 40/\$1.00; Walter Dunkelburger; 1443 Fourth Ave. S.; Fargo, N. D.

FANTASY ADVERTISER: 10c, 50c/yr.; Gus Wilmoth; 643 S. Bixel St., Los Angeles 14, Cal.

FANTASY COMMENTATOR: 25c, 5/\$1.00; A. Langley Searles; 19A E. 235th St., N. Y. City 66.

FANTASY-TIMES: 10c, 12/\$1.00; James V. Taurasi; 101-02 Northern Blvd., Corona, N. Y.

GORGON: 15c, 75c/yr. bi-monthly; Stanley Mullen; 4936 Grove St., Denver 11, Col.

IF!: 5c, 6/25c; Conrad A. Pederson; 705 W. Kelso St., Inglewood, Cal.

KAY MAR TRADER: 5c; K. Martin Carlson; 1028 Third Ave., Moorhead, Minn.

LUNACY: 5c; George Caldwell; 1115 San Anselmo Ave., San Anselmo, Cal.

NECROMANCER: 10c, 6/50c; David A. MacInnes; Box 1367, Memphis 1, Tenn.

SINE NOMEN: 5c; John Van Couvering; 902 N. Downey Ave., Downey, Cal.

SNIX: 10c, 4/25c; Walter A. Coslet; Box 6, Helena, Mont.

SPACEWARP: 10c, 12/\$1.00; Arthur H. Rapp; 2120 Bay St., Saginaw, Mich.

SPACETEER: 10c; 6/50c; Lin Carter, 865 20th Ave. S., St. Petersburg, Fla.

WILD HAIR: 10c; 2/15c; 1057 S. Normandie Ave., Los Angeles 6, Cal.

BURROUGHS BULLETIN: free; Vernell and Dorothea Coriell; Box 78, Manito, Ill.

LOKI: free; Gerry de la Ree; 9 Bogart Pl.; Westwood, N. J.

(Notice to fan editors: Space permitting, this list will appear regularly. To get on it you must send your fan publication for review purposes. If you quit publishing please notify us so we can drop your zine from the list.)

XERXES COUNTS HIS ARMY

DURING a respite from his conquests, Xerxes called all his chieftains together and issued an order requiring an accurate count of all men under their command. But how was this to be accomplished when the largest measure used in counting at that time was the myriad consisting of 10,000. Each commander surely would not go about his camp counting each soldier individually. Some system must be devised to cope with such a gigantic problem.

After numerous attempts, all resulting in despair, the various generals beseeched Xerxes to attempt a solution himself. Xerxes, cunning as he was in battle, put his full vigor to solving the problem

and soon after proposed this solution.

Assembling all of his armies about the fort of Doniscus he called for one myriad of soldiers. These were herded together in the open fields as close as possible one to another and a line drawn about them. He then commanded the artisans of his forces to build a stone wall on the line to the height of the navel of the average soldier. This accomplished, the remaining soldiers were put in the stone corral and the process repeated with an accurate count of the number of myriads or times the enclosure was filled. When the counting was finished Xerxes discovered he commanded a force of approximately 1,700,000 men. —C. Allen.

MYSTERIES of GEOLOGY

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

ARTICLE SIX THE ENIGMA OF THE PACIFIC

THERE are several theories of rifting, which is one of the enigmas of geology. None of them fulfill all the aspects of the Atlantic rift as it appears to have happened, yet by combining the theories of Daly and Willis, the present writer presents an idea of how the sialic arch of the Central Ridge could have been dropped by the escape of its supporting magma from underneath through the cracks of the rift and the volcanoes upon its surface, while at the same time, the continental shelves to either side moved away.

Compression is no less of an enigma to the modern geologist. Most of the earth's ranges

seem to bear evidence of more than one folding, and sometimes from opposite pressure. Yet if in imagination we can leave the earth and regard it from a distance, we will see that by a sort of rhythm these convulsions of nature were separated by millions of years. This rhythm seems to be a glacial in one hemisphere, followed by volcanism and mountain building in some parts while oceanic rifts are torn open in others. Spreading seas follow. Then a glacial in the opposite hemisphere is followed by the same sequence of events. This is hardly a chaotic thing. If it is not, it follows law, but what are these laws?

ONE of the strangest aspects of the planet to modern geologists is the Pacific Complex. As the Atlantic and the Indian are rift oceans and their story probably lies largely in the past, so the Pacific, on the other hand, may be an ocean whose story lies not entirely upon its surface, while at the same time, the continental shelves to either side moved away.

Around the border of the Pacific are strung the greater part of the earth's active volcanoes. Around its borders are also the most active seismic zones where earthquakes may be expected to be the general order of things. It is, of course, true that the Alpine-Himalaya Cordillera is an unstable zone, but there are two aspects of the Pacific which are unique. The Pacific holds the earth's most plutonic lavas and the earth's most plutonic earthquakes. The latter, those tremors whose epicenters are deeper within the crust than others, seem to originate about one hundred miles back from the present continental shelf. Thus in South America, they take their origin on the sharp eastern slope of the Andes.

There is another aspect of the Pacific which sets it off from the Atlantic and the Indian. The Pacific holds the earth's most plutonic deeps. Curiously enough, they are not situated near the center of the ocean like those of the other great water bodies. The deeps of the Pacific are usually very close to the continental shelves.

Perhaps one of the greatest faults of Wegener is that he ignored the Pacific, while of the others, Taylor is the only one of the drift theorists who gave it a hasty glance. Yet the Pacific holds the key to some of the other enigmas. That is, it holds the key if one uses depth charts as well as surface features.

If we could retreat far enough away from our planet to view it from a space-ship, certain great features would swing into our viewing screen. We would come to recognize readily the great oceans and mountain ranges, the latter of which, blending from one to another, like the Sierras and Rockies meeting the Mexican Sierras and running into the Andes, geologists have given the name cordilleras. To such an observer in our space-ship, the American, Australian and Asian Cordilleras would blend into the Pacific Cordillera.

Now if we could also view our planet with the scientific device of the future which Dr. Rieber described in his lecture to the American Society of Exploratory Geophysicists in their 1947 convention in Los Angeles,¹ we would be able to look below the rippling surface mantle of water which covers earth's great oceans and see their real geological features.

With the aid of such a device, the Atlantic and Indian would appear as tremendous earth tears, still marked by the features which accompanied their life stages. We would see their tributary rivers, the ends of which are still draining the continents to either side of the ocean. We

¹ Dr. Rieber of the Rieber Laboratories, N. Y., told the gathered scientists that the future would bring forth, among other scientific wonders, an instrument by means of which we could look down through the earth layers and see the bend and twist of the rocks below us in the crust. He said that we are living in the "late" days of science, but scientifically speaking, it is earlier than we think. (Incidentally, readers of science fiction magazines have always known that fact.)

would see these empty into the twin rivers which marked the North Atlantic, the South Atlantic and the Indian. However, the Pacific would present a totally different aspect.

With the aid of this future earth X-Ray Eye, we would see the unusual pattern of the world's greatest ocean. We would not only see how the deeps parallel the shores, but also how they form a wave motion with that shore. Of such a giant wave of stone, the tops of the Andes would be the crest, and the deeps beyond the shore, the trough. On the Australian side of the Pacific, this same pattern would become even more apparent. The tops of the Australian Mountains would be seen to sink to an off-shore valley, then rise again to the Great Barrier Reef, which just breaks the surface of the ocean. From there the floor would sink to a trough, rise again to an island ridge and again sink to a deep. Nor is this all, for this same pattern would be followed all around from New Zealand to the ridges which separate the Bering Sea.

Seeing the world-pattern of the Pacific, leaves one with the impression that whatever is happening to the Pacific is affecting the entire basin. It also leaves one with the impression (seeing the string of active volcanoes and the zones of active earthquakes) that this something is still going on. But the strongest impression is that, contrary to the Atlantic and the Indian, which are oceans of rift and tension, this is a bed of COMPRESSION.

One is reminded of the words of Daly who insisted on the strength of the Pacific Basin. Yes, undoubtedly it does have strength, but as much of Daly's writing showed he was well aware, the Pacific bed is apparently wrinkling before the crushing encirclement of the continental shelves. **THE CONTINENTS ARE ALL APPARENTLY RIDING INTO THE PACIFIC.**

It is hard to see how Wegener, if he had studied the pattern of ridge and deep which the Pacific presents, would have conceived his theory that Australia and Asia were moving west. Again the criticisms of Wegener flashed to mind. The mountains would hardly be on the advancing side of one continent and on the retreating side of the other. Of course, they were not. They were on the advancing side of both continents. And that criticism of the great geophysicist Bowie, that the mass of North America would have slid further was against the laws of geophysics, since Asia, being larger, should have gone farther and on a deeper plane. We must also remember that Taylor took the opportunity to point out that this is what happened. It would seem that Taylor was right about this. Both continents have moved into the Pacific Basin, but Asia has apparently moved further because her coastline is in a more advanced stage of rifting. Japan and the Philippines were once a part of that coast during the Pleistocene, for mammoths, too heavy to swim, demand it as a part of the land during the ice age, since they are to be found there. Indeed the

range whose peaks are the island of Japan, is closer to foundering than the cracking coastline of California.

With the pattern of the Pacific as a compression, in mind, it is easy to see how the sialic arch of the Atlantic and the Indian was dropped, because the continents which had supported it moved away. However, the Pacific must not just be regarded as a simple compression. On the contrary, there is a distinct line between Asian life and Australian life forms. Furthermore, Daly has found granitic bombs (bits of old granite) in the lavas of Fiji, and has suggested that probably at one time it was a part of the shelf which extended from New Zealand to Fiji. If this is the case, what about Polynesia? Was it once a continent overridden and shattered by the advancing Australian shelf?

That the Dutch islands are still advancing toward the Pacific is the opinion of the Dutch geologists who have studied the region. Similarly, it is evident to anyone who has studied the geology of California that the land west of the San Andreas Fault is rifting off. At Gorman in the Red Rock Canyon Country, there is an outcrop of rock which has been dragged some two hundred miles along the fault. The oil pipes crossing the fault must be suspended so that they can be periodically extended, and from an airplane view, all the streams descending the scarp cliffs are bent where their beds meet the fault line. The fault runs in a sharp line with only a few bends from the California Gulf to San Francisco Bay where it enters the ocean. Of course, its length is marked by the oil fields, for oil runs into the earth cracks, and it is along them that the geologists drill. We know that this coastline between the cut and the sea is moving northwest. Whether it is moving in an opposite direction from the rest of the continent, or merely faster than the rest of the continent, we do not know.

THERE are other curiosities in the geology of California. The drowned lands just beyond the Los Angeles basin (see the map of Article 3) are composed of sialic, or continental rock. At one time, some one-hundred-mile-wide strip of land rifted off and collapsed into the sea. Dr. David Banks Rogers speaks of the abundance of village life which seemed to exist when the oak tree was the main source of food. These villages were located at the end of what are now sharp cliffs that drop to the sea. Sometimes, he says, one village is found at the end of a point jutting into a bay, and on the opposite point across the bay is the rest of the village, or rather, a part of the rest of the village. Great columns of rock left standing by the rifting movement have human bones protruding from the top of them where some ancient cemetery was dropped away into the sea.

Even of more interest to the geologist is the recent folding of the present earth layers in California. Signal Hill (known for its oil), near

Long Beach, was the bed of a river during the Pleistocene. Furthermore, in any earth cut in and about the city of Los Angeles, or its suburbs, one can see the bending and twisting of, not only the older rocks, but the late layers of soil. The Pleistocene has already been heavily deformed. The Coast Range is rising. It seems on the way to become the Andes of the future.

Speaking of the California Pleistocene, Reed calls attention to the deformation of North Dome in the Kettleman Hills, saying: "At some stage of the Pleistocene, the beds were sharply folded . . . the height of North Dome may have reached 5000 feet during the period of folding. At a later stage, the region seems to have been reduced to one of low relief, with many low hills standing a few hundred feet above the plains to east and west. This subdued surface was again arched upward, and has been greatly dissected by the rejuvenated streams."

As we circle the Pacific in our space-ship and view it through the screen of the X-Ray Eye, all these facts press in upon us. We also remember the explanation of the Pacific rifting² in which Bowie and Daly seem to so well agree. The continental wall may be likened to a prow of a ship which is breaking strong ice. For a distance it rides out over the ice, and then after the weight is sufficient, it breaks through, only to again continue the cycle. The Pacific was not exactly like this to Joly for he explained the Pacific Complex by suggesting that the expanded ocean floor was undercutting the continents. Undoubtedly this would cause most of the same Pacific phenomena

² For Daly's explanation of the process of rifting which seems exceptionally well fitted for the phenomena of the Pacific, see Article 5 on the Enigma of Rifting.

but the theory would not explain the rifting of the Atlantic and the Indian.

Among other facts, we remember the strength of the ocean floor, which, nevertheless, seems to be wrinkling before the advance of the continents.³ This ability of it to move, even though with geological slowness, we will call by its scientific name—its viscosity. Every material on earth seems to have viscosity, including the rocks of our planet's mountain ranges, and the beds of its oceans.

Thus in our circle of the Pacific, we have been given the key to one of the phases of our problem. We have seen how the younger ranges spread out like giant ripples of stone which continue under the bed of the Pacific Ocean. Although the continents may have at one time clashed along the line of the Mediterranean, yet today they seem to be moving into the Pacific Ocean. We do seem to be making definite progress toward clearing up the mystery of earth's history, although several of the questions which stopped Taylor and Wegener still seem to be unanswerable. But are they?

In my next article we shall take up another phase of the problem as we track down this greatest of all mysteries to its apparent solution, for I now believe that there is a solution.

Yet there is no enigma of our problem more fascinating than the enigma of the Pacific Ocean, for although the story of the Atlantic and Indian lies largely in the past, that of the Pacific, on the other hand, gives us strong reason to ponder for a moment in the hurry of our tiny gnat-like lives, and reflect on the shadow of things to come.

³ Bowie believed that continents and oceans were seeking perfect adjustment, while along the Pacific shores this adjustment was very imperfect.

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THE END OF THE WORLD

THE middle ages, like all other periods of history, had its share of soothsayers and seers. As in the past each tried to give the answer to the question as to when this world would see its last days. The greater part of them, based on "quack" information, rash judgment, false interpretation of changes in nature, had their avid believers. However, none as yet, has surpassed the following of the prediction of Nostradamus. Perhaps because many of his predictions had come to pass, the Middle Age monk was

forced to predict the end of the world. How he arrived at the following prediction is not known but this is how it went. When Good Friday fell on Saint George's Day, April 23rd, Easter Sunday on Saint Mark's Day and Corpus Christi fell on John the Baptist Day, June 24th, the world would soon after see its consummation.

These coincidences have occurred many times since the days of Nostradamus, the last being in 1943. How many chances Nostradamus allowed himself is not known either. —G. L. Moss.

DEATH TRAP FOR GIANTS

By MILDRED MURDOCH

Los Angeles has, within its city limits, an amazing death trap where prehistoric elephants have died

WILD elephants in the U. S. A.? There used to be some, only it was a long time before this country was called the United States, quite a long time, in fact. Just how many hundreds of thousands of years ago it was, science can only guess. Besides the elephants, which were huger by far than the elephants of today, there were also giant saber-tooth tigers, great wolves, mastodons, and many other animals of types unknown today.

Nature set a strange, efficient trap, at the time when climatic changes were producing slow extinction of the mighty beasts which roamed this continent many eons ago. In this trap bones were preserved, bones which furnish clues as to conditions of the past, and remind us how very new and short in time is our present civilization. The discovery of this trap full of bones has added immeasurably to the knowledge of science concerning the past of this country.

What is now southern California was once a tropical jungle, and here lived the largest mammals which have ever existed. As the ages passed, the land gradually dried out. The jungles parched, the lakes evaporated, and the rivers dwindled away to nothing. The giant beasts went wherever water could be found.

In a spot which is now within the city limits of Los Angeles, was a large pool of water. The pool was a deadly trap. Though water covered the surface, beneath the water was live asphalt, or brea. The gluey stuff was more relentless than quicksand. Enormous elephants, wading in for a drink, were hopelessly bogged down, and sank slowly to their death. Other animals, hundreds of them, also met their death in this place. At that, their end was probably more merciful, being quicker, than that of many of their fellows who escaped the trap; for inevitably death came to all of them, as the land became a desert which could not longer support life in the massive creatures.

It was as late as 1906 that the discovery was made that this pool contained the well preserved bones of countless prehistoric animals. It was the most important find ever made in paleontology.

Previously, only an occasional bone of the Imperial elephant had been found; here were brought to light seventeen complete skeletons. Science had known of the saber-tooth tiger; but in this graveyard were found the bones of over six hundred



Wandering into what seemed to be only a pool of water, many mastodons went to their deaths in the asphalt beneath

of them, with much longer tusks than had previously been found. There were the bones of hundreds of an immense wolf. There were horses; it had been thought that the horse first came to this country with the early Spaniards. There was the giant ground-sloth; fragments had been found elsewhere in the world of this strange beast, but in this pit was found the only complete skeleton. There were camels, antelope, and many other animals, some of which had not before been known to exist. There were many varieties of birds, among them a type of condor with a wing spread of fourteen feet. All these thousands of skeletons were taken out of an area only one hundred and fifty feet wide and about fourteen hundred feet long. Another unique feature of this valuable mine of bones is that in no other part of the world have been found skeletons preserved in asphalt.

When the bones have been cleaned of the sticky black stuff, they present a story, to those who can read it, of the life and conditions of the region half a million years ago. This most curious of all death traps, set by Nature at a time when many species were about to become extinct, kept a record for future men of the giant beasts which had once inhabited their own country.

DISCUSSIONS



AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

Address Your Letters to:

AMAZING STORIES "DISCUSSIONS," ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING CO.

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A STEADY READER

Sirs:

I am a steady reader of AMAZING STORIES and other like publications. I have just been reading the June issue of A.S.; and it is mostly devoted to the Shaver stories. I have read all the other issues too, and specially found the March and August issues fine, on account of their two serials, which were way out of the ordinary. But give us some more of Shaver, or we will be disappointed.

I know that some really believe in what Shaver writes; believe it to be a fact. Most of us don't, but we do find it interesting reading, and that's why we buy A.S. Also, there is nothing evil or disgusting about Shaver's writing; it is clean and untainted by the subtle rottenness emanating from some other writers, for example, Lovecraft, Machen or maybe others. Merritt's works too had the same quality as Shaver's.

As for Lovecraft, I have read all his stories, and I find them intriguing, but putrid. They are unwholesome, and it was better they were forgotten. Machen's stories are worse, if anything; they are filled with subtle evil. They should be allowed to rest in peace. Reading them, you halfway believe the subtle, dero influences Shaver hints.

In none of Shaver's work is there any subtle rottenness or evil; they could be read by young people without danger. Your other stories are good too. But I don't see why Shaver couldn't write a real long and interesting story. We all know it is fiction but we like that kind of fiction once in a while.

As for the "Devil's Tower" mentioned, I think it is a tree. I have seen lots of petrified wood and had some big chunks in my possession once (unfortunately I lost them while moving from the Dalles to Portland in 1913). I don't know what makes wood petrified, but there is lots of it, and it is heavy.

There are many mysteries here in U.S.A. Many things we have never thought of. For example, Why was this country not developed? Furthermore, it is a matter of history, that since the white race was established here the civilization of mankind advanced by leaps and bounds. We ad-

vanced more in the 50 years than mankind advanced in 50 centuries, or so I deem it. Why? It could be answered, doubtless, but I won't try to.

Well, so long, for now. Maybe the new issue of your mag. which I haven't got yet holds something intriguing. The first thing my three grown sons (30-35, with businesses and families; all radiomen) ask me when they come to see me is, "Have you got any scientific magazines? AMAZING STORIES especially."

Emily Andrews Thompson

3963 NE 9th Avenue

Portland 12, Oregon

We've wondered a lot, too, how come petrified wood is heavier than wood. Maybe it's because it's impregnated with stone from an outside source, maybe something dissolved in water, which soaks in and hardens there. However, some of the petrified tree-trunks we've seen are high and dry in high altitudes, and are not even underground, and according to geologists, never were. But who can tell? Seems it's pretty much a scientific mystery. As for your sons, we're flattered to know they call our magazine a "scientific" one, even if it is what is known as "scientifiction." After all, our fiction isn't always fiction, after time rolls by. Witness the atom bomb. It was fiction one day, and we said it would be fact, with all the faith of a true believer—and by golly, it IS a fact. Good old AMAZING STORIES has invented thousands of things in its 22 year history!—Ed.

CARLSBAD OPEN

Sirs:

Several of your readers have written us to verify a story in the January issue of AMAZING STORIES that Carlsbad Caverns National Park is closed to the tourist. We asked one party for the name of the magazine publishing such a story and we now have pages 169-170, January issue, which reads as follows:

As for the locality, we've heard a great many sensational stories of what the army is finding in Carlsbad Caverns. You know, tourists are no longer allowed to visit that cave, according to a

newspaper story recently published, which caused something of a sensation.—Ed.”

We would appreciate very much a correction of this erroneous statement to the effect that Carlsbad Caverns National Park is open every day in the year, has not been closed a single day since its inception, and that 405,226 persons visited the Caverns in 1947 and attendance this month shows a large increase over the same period of '47.

Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce,
Victor L. Minter, Secretary.

ATTENTION ALL SHAVER FANS

Sirs:

This is to let all the fans of Richard Shaver know in AMAZING STORIES, that the “Shaver Mystery” has been turned over entirely to the Shaver Mystery Club. This is an important step since the Shaver Mystery has been proved in a great number of ways during the past few months. As you may have read in this magazine, since the Shaver Mystery can no longer be disguised as fiction, it no longer can be fully presented in a fiction magazine. For this reason the Shaver Mystery Club, founded last year for the express purpose of proving, or disproving, the Shaver Mystery, is now taking the burden of presenting this startling collection of facts and data that have proved beyond any doubt that the theories of Richard Shaver are in a great sense true.

In the third issue of the Club Magazine, the full and true story of the flying disks is for the first time revealed. This story, complete with facts and figures, and detailing the whole story “behind the scenes” as witnessed by Kenneth Arnold, the man who first saw the now famous “flying disks,” is one of the great proofs that have come to light on the Shaver Mystery.

And coupling this startling account with Shaver's own thought-provoking narration on the Life of Christ, his already famous “Mandark,” appearing in serial form in the club magazine because of its unusual length—200,000 words, there can no longer be any question but what Richard Shaver has not only begun to prove his theories, but has done so. But you may be the judge.

So I would like to take this opportunity to tell all interested readers of A.S. that if you have not already joined the club, now is the time to do so. As I have pointed out a number of times in previous letters, there are no club dues. The only cost of membership is subscription to the club magazine which we have finally been able to arrange a regular publication schedule for. Three issues have already been sent to club members, and the fourth will be in the mail around the time this announcement reaches you. Subscription price is one dollar for each two issues, and you may subscribe for as many as you want to in advance. The subscriptions are used solely to pay for the publication of the magazine, and the more members there are, the larger the magazine will become,

and the more able to present in fuller detail all the latest articles pertaining to the Mystery. So if you have not already done so, please get in touch with me and join the club. And if you are already a member, and have any experiences or facts of your own to contribute and have not already done so, please send your own experiences in, even if they are personal. Only through your cooperation can we achieve the goal we have set ourselves to reach.

Chester S. Geier
President
The Shaver Mystery Club
2414 Lawrence Ave.
Chicago 25, Ill.

Your editors would like to add that Chet Geier, one of your favorite writers, has done a marvelous job in organizing the Shaver Mystery Club, and all you interested readers of AS are missing something if you haven't already joined the club. And we might add that the story of the flying disks is something terrific—and also “Mandark,” both of which Mr. Geier mentions in his letter.—Ed.

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MORE ABOUT "THE GREEN MAN" AND COMMENTS BY THE AUTHOR

Sirs:

Sherman's done it again! "The Green Man Returns" is surely as much a classic as "The Green Man."

And besides being great entertainment, Sherman's got some excellent ideas in his Constitution for the United States of the World, especially his replacement of the Profit System with the Merit System . . .

Samuel Goldwyn,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Thanks for the bouquet! When you readers yelled for an "encore" I contacted the Green Man and entreated him to return to our sorry planet. Am glad you liked his second visit—Sherman

Sirs:

Does Harold M. Sherman believe in the ideas he wrote about in "The Green Man Returns"? I think it's a shame that such an idea should have to be written in fiction but it surely makes a wonderful story.

Religious, racial and political prejudice are what have put this world in its present spot. . . .

Mrs. T. L. Slaughter,
Box No. 4,
Kugo Harbor, Michigan.

Of course I believe in these ideas brought to Earth by the Green Man! Numar, as a Being from Another Planet, had the outside viewpoint and perspective not possible to a Human and could thus see as we cannot and will not see ourselves. But Mankind is too filled with Hate and Greed and Fear and Lust for Power to bring about these Changes or accept such a New Plan of Living for centuries yet to come.—Sherman

Sirs:

Your star feature, "The Green Man Returns" was very interesting. A lot of it is directly traceable to Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward" but the Plan in this is better for only an outside pressure, such as Numar's, would bring about a total eclipse of the Profit System. . . .

A. Bernice Clark,
219 Rockwood Blvd.,
Spokane, 10, Washington.

Interesting that you should liken my "The Green Man Returns" to Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward." I have always considered his story a classic of its kind and have made a stage play of it which I hope, one day, will be produced.—Sherman

Sirs:

Your recent story, "The Green Man Returns" was very interesting. The plot was just as good as ever but the contents were *remarkable*. Many have had the same thoughts but how could they be expressed! Now you have *done it*.

The value of what was included in the contents

will never be recognized. This I am sure of, as long as man is man and moral philosophy exists.

I, myself, completely agree on this Plan so far as World Government is concerned, and I do wish that Mr. Sherman would give us a more definite outline of this Plan. I believe that many other readers feel as I do, so will you please consider doing this.

Richard Z. Ward,
P.O. Box 623,
Warren, Pa.

Thank you for your invitation to present more of this New Plan of Living in detail. The object of Fantasy, beyond entertainment, is to make the reader think. You say that many have had the same thoughts. This Great Change must take place in human hearts before any such plan can become operable. I have no axe to grind. I belong to no cult or ism or political organization. I love my fellow man of whatever race or creed or color and am greatly concerned at what I observe him doing to himself. A New Plan of Living which will solve our earth's problems and bring about true brotherhood must come about eventually by universal demand. Unhappily, without a Numar to help us, as Miss Clark suggests, it is doubtful if we can accomplish this by ourselves.—Sherman

Sirs:

I read "The Green Man" and liked it. I gave little thought to a sequel, but I always read AMAZING, so bought the December number.

Mr. Sherman, no mere reader can know the actual "innards" of a writer, because, if he is good, having decided upon a character in a story, he puts into the mouth of that character, the things that make it live on paper, and into that same character the actions that are logical.

But whether with an idea to give to Humanity as a mass, or merely a follow-up on "The Green Man," in his return, you have outlined the ONLY plan whereby the Human Race may save itself from destruction. And, that holocaust is right now over us.

I am not, I hope, a "calamity howler," neither do I see any chance whatsoever for "peace in OUR TIME . . .

Now, all this, as you may guess, is leading up to something. Mr. Sherman—is there any way in the world that people can be made to realize that YOUR plan for a new political set-up is the ONLY salvation and hope for the world? If there is, count on me to be one of the workers to help bring it about. . . .

I do not mean to preach but YOUR plan would save the world and its inhabitants. If Man would make these changes within his heart first, then bring them into manifestation in the external world.

Thank you for "The Green Man Returns,"
Mrs. Irene M. Steen,
1319 South Grand Avenue,
Los Angeles, 15, California.

It is heartening to know that so many persons, like yourself, have preserved your ideals in a time of such general disillusionment. I wish I could offer hope that any GOOD plan for world government might be accepted by the majority of rulers and peoples and made to work! The history of Mankind is one of slow upward progress at stupendous blood cost—but we are nearing a time when the Great Change must take place, if Humanity is to save itself from another Dark Ages. Perhaps when the Crisis arrives, we will each be guided to do our part toward bringing about a better world.—Sherman

Sirs:

Having been an avid reader and steady collector of Science Fiction reading for the last six years, I can honestly say that no magazine dedicated to this most interesting phase of novels can quite compare with AMAZING STORIES.

Of the HUNDREDS of stories from your magazine that I have been privileged to read, I'll cast my vote for Harold M. Sherman's "The Green Man Returns" which was revealed in the December publication.

Sirs:

Thanks for Harold Sherman's magnificent novel, "The Green Man Returns." It was one of the most thought-provoking stories I have ever read in AMAZING STORIES. I also wish to congratulate you on being courageous enough to print authentic tales despite the large amount of criticism they invoke.

Herman King,
707 Shields St.
Hamilton, Va.

I'd like to congratulate Ray Palmer, too, on his editorial courage in letting his writers "blow their imaginative tops"—his only requirement being that they produce a good, entertaining story.—Sherman

Sirs:

I have just finished reading that very fine story, "The Green Man Returns" in the December issue of AMAZING STORIES. I have read the magazine from the beginning but I do not remember ever reading a more interesting or thought-provoking story.

It deals with the most important problem confronting Mankind, namely that of providing for Man's needs, protecting man's rights and promoting man's welfare. It offers some very suggestive ideas for solving this problem. Unless it is solved, the human race will very probably destroy itself with its internecine and unnecessary conflicts.

The thing that astounds me is the fact that you would print a story that questions the sanctity of what is called, with grim humor, the Free Enterprise System. Very few magazines will do that to—
(Concluded on page 178)

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PROOF (Concluded from page 163)

who went up on orders to chase a flying saucer observed in Kentucky, is proof of that. Orders to follow and determine origin, identity, destination, purpose of such mystery objects are standing orders with all such personnel.

Best proof of all, is the recent revelation that two gigantic globes of a golden color, trailing orange tails, were seen to emerge (apparently) from the ground near Walla-Walla, Washington, and in Oregon, and proceed straight up at terrific speed into space.

But don't take it from us. *Fate* magazine, *Science News Letter* and the bulletins of the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* have presented all of these three proofs in detail. You should read them and be informed that at least three phases of the Shaver Mystery are no longer a mystery, but established fact. As far as we're concerned, that settles the matter.

From now on the Shaver Mystery will be carried on by the fan club organized for that purpose, in the pages of its fan magazine. Those of you fans who are Shaver backers will find the non-fiction discussions and arguments and developments in Chester Geier's club magazine. We've read several copies and they look good. But they are not in story form, of course, and not suited to *Amazing Stories*.

We salute Mr. Shaver. He is entirely vindicated in our eyes. And we'll let the scientific journals carry on, from now on, while we go on to new things. If, by any chance, somebody digs up a dero, or a stim mech, we'll give you the dope. But if they do, you can bet SCIENCE will take credit for the discovery. Okay, but Shaver and *Amazing Stories* told you all these things first! BEFORE they were TRUE.

Amazing Stories will present further proofs as they are announced by scientific men, and we are sure there will be many more. The shocking and indisputable evidence we have already presented cannot be questioned, and covering, as it does, three major portions of the Shaver Mystery, leaving *only one*, the actual caverns and their inhabitants and machines, to go, is far more than we ever hoped to present.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FLYING DISKS

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SPACESHIPS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

By James B. Settles

(See Back Cover)

THE ancient land of Egypt is perhaps the source of the most fascinating old legends and romantic and mysterious notions in all the world. The mysterious face of the Sphinx and the secret she is supposed to have locked in her inscrutable stone head; the mathematical and astronomical marvel that is the Great Pyramid; the awesome, shifting sands of the Desert with its legend of having once been the bottom of an ocean—supposed to be born out by a water mark high on the pyramid which would make it incredibly old, if true . . . all these things serve to focus curiosity on its ruins and its ancient history.

Let's take the Great Pyramid first. Either the ancient Egyptians were possessed of a culture and knowledge and wisdom equal to, or greater than our own (greater if we take into consideration that modern astronomers have not been half so successful in orienting an observatory with the stars) or they got help from somewhere else. But where? And what race of people? Were they of this earth at all?

If they were not, then we are presented with a picture of an ancient Egyptian civilization which had contacted, or been contacted by, a civilization from another planet. Since it does not seem logical (nor borne out by Egyptian legends themselves) that the spaceships by which this contact was made were ships of earth, then we have visitors from other worlds coming here ages ago.

Is it really true that the god, Horus, did come to earth in great spaceship? Did he bring others with him, and build Egypt to its ancient greatness? Was it his knowledge which culminated in the engineering marvel, the Great Pyramid? Was its purpose to preserve for future men the record of his visit? Is the proof of that, plus the ancient knowledge of that interplanetary race concealed somewhere in the gigantic stone pile as so many Egyptian legends insist?

Pictured on the back cover of this magazine is a painting of ancient Egypt, showing the great spaceships that may have used the desert as a landing field. In those days the Pyramid was new, with a gleaming white surface, and the desert sands had not covered the sphinx. It must have presented a picture of advancement and culture which not even the miracles of today could approach.

Students of ancient Egyptian history may someday uncover proof that what has been pictured here is more than just a legend, and that spaceships may actually have visited dead and gone Egypt.

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DISCUSSIONS

(Concluded from page 175)

day. I congratulate you.

I am delighted with the fact that the author recognizes the fact that the race is under an obligation to provide for the needs of its members . . .

Phil J. Evans, County Attorney,
Owyhee County,
Murphy, Idaho.

We are all under great obligation to each other, Mr. Evans—as you point out—we must survive together or not at all. May I thank the host of readers who expressed appreciation similar to those your editor has printed and whose wonderful letters were too numerous for me to personally acknowledge? Numar has become a very real character to me. I like his ideas for World Betterment. I wish he might truly come to Earth and take over and get busy changing the things which need to be changed—including human nature! I'm sure now that he'd have many willing followers!—
Sherman

A REQUEST

Sirs:

I'd like to find out all I can about "Soul Projection." I know that it can be done but that it is dangerous to do so. I've seen it mentioned various times in various guises in your magazine and now I wonder if you would accord me enough space in your Discussions to ask any of your readers who can do this and would be willing to tell me to write to me.

L. B. Christy
P.O. Box 5
Kelso, Wash.

Sorry we can't tell you how to do that! But we'll pass on your request to our readers. If you get an answer, we'd sure like to see it!—Ed.

HOW TO CLEAN YOUR TEETH

Sirs:

Pour some oil on water and then pass a stick through it—the oil film opens before the stick but closes again behind it. This is exactly what happens in the case of your toothbrush's bristles when they cut the film on everyone's teeth caused by the fats and sweets we eat.

What must be done is to change the chemical composition of the acidic film so that it will not have a high enough surface tension to unite again. This can be done by brushing the teeth with a mixture of ivory soap and baking soda which will make it basic. Really it doesn't taste as bad as it sounds and you may have fifty percent less decay.

Frederick P. Ladd Jr.
39 Weld Hall
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

Well, it certainly is cheaper!—Ed.

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*J. T., Marcelona, Mich.



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*S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.



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*D. E. G., Wausau, Wisc.



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I am finding a new joy that I never experienced before. For I have always wanted to play, but had given up hope until I heard of your course.
*C. S., Lucien, Okla.



Plays After 2 Months

I hesitated before sending for your course because of an earlier experience I had with a course by ear from another company. I am playing pieces now I never dreamed I would play after only two months.
*E. T., Prichard, Ala.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

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